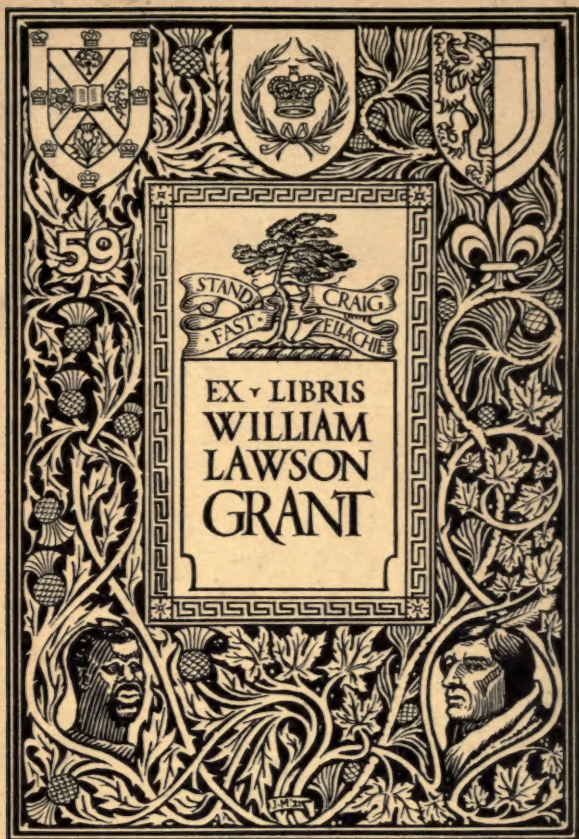




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W. L. Grant,
with the kindest regards
from the author.

Oxford.

July 22, 1920.



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Royal Berkshire Regiment

THE LIFE OF
RONALD POULTON

BY HIS FATHER

EDWARD BAGNALL POULTON



LONDON
SIDGWICK & JACKSON, LTD.

1919



TO THE BRIGHT SWEET MEMORY OF RONALD'S ELDEST AND
YOUNGEST SISTERS WHO, LIKE HIM, WERE FULL OF LOVE
AND JOY AND LIFE, A CONSTANT SOURCE OF STRENGTH AND
HAPPINESS TO OTHERS

EMILY HILDA, MRS. E. W. AINLEY WALKER

DIED AUGUST 6, 1917

JANET MARY PALMER, MRS. C. P. SYMONDS

KILLED BY A FALL FROM HER BICYCLE, JULY 23, 1919

PREFACE

THE immeasurable tragedy of our time demands a treatment of our dear ones different from that which would have been right in past years, the years that seemed so changeless, when each generation looked proudly upon its band of brilliant youths—a full and splendid company in spite of all the inroads of disease and accident. In this generation the War has taken well-nigh all of our best, and future ages will know nothing of what they were and promised to be unless we give them the chance. It is a trust laid upon us alone—no others can do the work—to preserve a record of the young men of our day who, if we do not see to it, will be forgotten because they took the highest line and sacrificed everything they held dear, everything they hoped to achieve, nay, would have achieved. I know well that, while those who loved them are here, their memories will not only be secure but ripen with the passing years, losing something of the sadness but always gaining in glory as they stand out more and more distinctly against the background of history. But what of brothers and sisters too young to remember them? What of the generations unborn?

There is comfort in the thought that a true picture, if we can only attain to it, will endure, and that death will then bring an undimmed remembrance rarely granted to life itself.

‘He will not do the work on earth that we had hoped’ were words spoken of Ronald a few weeks after his death by his dear friend William Temple in the Memorial Service

at Oxford. But I trust that the story of what he was may, by its appeal, still accomplish or at least help to accomplish some part of all that he hoped. 'He being dead yet speaketh.'

The book has grown beyond the bounds I should have preferred to keep because I have felt constrained to represent Ronald as one with his family and one with his friends, above all those who have given their lives in the same great cause. Ronald would, I know—his whole life proves it—wish to be thought of with the glorious band which includes nearly all the intimate friends of his own age, and received Dick Dugdale, the dearest of all, only a few weeks before the armistice.

It was originally intended to dedicate the volume to their memory—I hope and believe that it will still be looked upon as a memorial of them—to Dragon friends—Martin Collier and Hugh Sidgwick; Rugby friends—C. Bushell, Dick Dugdale, H. F. Garrett, H. Podmore, comrades at the Rugby Boys' Club, Kenneth Powell who also preceded him as the chief athlete of the School, C. C. Watson who shared the football captaincy with him, 'Ruth' Arbuthnot and Roby Gotch, companions on walking tours; Balliol friends—Keith Rae and Stephen Reiss, co-workers in the Balliol Boys' Club; Reading friends—C. T. Waldy, Eric and Eustace Sutton who helped him in the Reading Boys' Club; Athletic friends—Tom Allen, J. G. Bussell, Kenneth Garnett, R. O. Lagden, F. N. Tarr, F. H. Turner, a few out of the great company mentioned in this book and in many another.

The attempt to represent Ronald as one of a band of friends, the number of his letters and the extracts from his accounts of the years—although but a small proportion of both these—have compelled me to print in an appendix much that I had hoped to include in the sections into which the book is divided. Had I done so, the length of

some of them would have too greatly delayed the onward movement of his life. The sequence in the appendix being the same as that of the sections, it is believed that there will be little difficulty in bringing the two together.

Ronald's life will, I hope, gain in interest by an attempt, in the first section, to set forth his character and personality and to describe the conditions amid which he lived. Among these the influence of the family and the power of simple things are emphasized. Football and Boys' Clubs are dealt with in special sections, and an indication of the subjects and periods of the other sections will be found in the head-lines.

Many who knew Ronald only as an athlete will, I think, be surprised at the variety and breadth of his interests. In showing their scope I am far from undervaluing the single one which absorbed almost the whole attention of the Press when writing of his death. His football career was, in the words of Major S. Harold Baker,¹ 'a mere fraction of his activity, and had he lived I am sure he would have been known for greater things than that; even though the cleanness and sportsmanship and quick resolve shown upon the football field stand for much more than some people think'.

C. W. Corbett Fisher, who at first knew Ronald only as a Rugby player but later on gained a wider knowledge of him, wrote nearly two years after his death that his loss as an athlete is 'nothing in comparison with that of his immense possibilities as a social force. Especially after this war, he might have brought us another century ahead.'

Another friend, Walter Dimpleby, saw in him the qualities 'we so urgently need in these difficult times of reconstruction. Apart from his noble character, his mind

¹ Gloucester Regt., killed March 23, 1918, after holding Redoubt thirty-six hours.

was plastic and ever ready to learn and take in new thoughts and ideals. He had "vision", a priceless gift in these days.'

I trust that the story of Ronald's life may enable the reader to judge how far these opinions of his friends were justified.

The letters and extracts from Ronald's accounts of the years remain almost precisely as he wrote them, but a few obvious slips, due to hurried writing, have been corrected. It was not thought necessary or desirable to indicate these slight changes.

The boundless sympathy and help I have received in writing this volume are gratefully acknowledged in its pages, but I must here also make special mention of all the time and pains freely given by Mr. C. P. Evers, Mr. P. Guedalla, my son Dr. E. P. Poulton, Mr. Frank Sidgwick, my son-in-law Dr. C. P. Symonds, and the Rev. William Temple, and by Mr. A. C. M. Croome in his valuable contribution to the two football sections.

E. B. P.

OXFORD: *Sept. 29, 1919.*

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I

PERSONALITY AND ENVIRONMENT

He was always the same whenever I met him, absolutely natural, affectionate, and true. —Lt.-Col. C. BUSHELL, V.C., D.S.O. (at Rugby and Oxford with Ronald), killed Aug. 8, 1918.

BEFORE giving the history of Ronald's short but crowded life it is, I think, right first to try to show what he was, and also to say something about the conditions in which he grew up. I believe that each stage in his life will be better understood if read in the light of this first section.

To understand Ronald's influence and the secret of all the strength and joy brought freely, and as it seemed unconsciously, to others of all ages, with all kinds of pursuits and interests, and especially to the young, to understand this is to explain the magic of personality. When all is said we come back to the central fact that he was himself, and under all changes of circumstance always true to himself, always the same.

If we attempt to define the indefinable we may say that personality is the power of influencing others which the outer man contributes to the inner, a power which depends on the completeness with which the outer expresses the inner. What onomatopoeia is to verse, so, only far more, is personality to the man.

It has been said with much truth that oratorical success resides in the audience; and so with a great personality, all that memory has stored of experience and reputation, of joys given or victories gained, are woven into the impression received, are all summed up and, as it were, echoed and re-echoed while new joys are felt and victories renewed. So Ronald's friends have said that they smiled when they saw him. And as men go through the world

and compare one experience with another they come to feel instinctively drawn towards a few rare beings who seem to express outwardly all that they most admire, so that without knowing, or knowing but little, they feel that they know intimately, and seem to be in the presence of a dearly loved friend.

The mother of a Balliol friend has written of Ronald :—

‘One evening in 1912 he came to dine with us. He sat next me at dinner, and I at once fell under the spell of his charming and lovable personality, and, although we only met on that one occasion, I had heard so much about him, that I have always thought of him as an intimate friend. He was so natural, and so transparently sincere, so courteous and gracious, that it was impossible not to be drawn to him, and I felt proud and thankful that my boy possessed such a friendship.’

It was the same with many who had never met him at all, as in the following words written in kindly sympathy by a stranger :—

‘My wife shed many tears when she heard of his death, and she had never met him, but we both realized what an irreparable loss the community had sustained. It is probably difficult for you to realize how widespread was his reputation as being in all respects a pattern of what we would all wish our own children and brothers to be.’

Many memories remain, and some of them will appear in later pages, of Ronald’s personality as a leader in games and the way it impressed the players on his side. It was the same with onlookers, even those who had never spoken to him, who came to see him rather than the game itself.

Out of many letters conveying this impression I select one written May 10, 1915, to my son-in-law, Capt. Ainley Walker, by Capt. Walter H. Moberly, D.S.O., Fellow of Lincoln College, Oxford :—

‘What one admired in him so much was always something more than mere physical or athletic excellence, however great. It was that, in some way, his personality

showed through, even to the spectator in the ring. And so for years he has been a sort of hero in our family, though we none of us knew him well in the ordinary way. We have followed all his successes very eagerly. We have taken a keen interest in Rugby football; but far more because it was the scene of *his* triumphs than for its own sake.

‘But though in a sense my knowledge of this side of him was second-hand, I can’t help feeling as if I really knew him; as if there was something in his personality which declared itself even to those who only looked on and admired from a distance. A man who was at Balliol with him said to me on Saturday, “There was something so *radiant* about his personality.” And, looking back, I think that must be why I feel as if I had the sort of knowledge of what he was that a friend might have had, though I cannot claim anything but the most casual acquaintance.’

One chief secret of Ronald’s influence lay in the combination of qualities that are in most people irreconcilable. The brightness and charm of the swift shallow stream cannot be united to all the depth and power of the mighty river, yet it was just such a union that his friends found in Ronald. He was a born leader without the faintest trace of arrogance or of an over-bearing manner, an extraordinary individualist who was the most unselfish of players. With him everything was for his team and nothing for himself, but he inspired others with the feeling that everything was for their captain and nothing for themselves.

A Rugby friend, Lt. A. Hugh-Jones, who can remember no positive incidents associated with Ronald, writes from Egypt:—

‘More than once in talking of the war we have agreed that of all the losses among our friends he will be the one that we shall feel the most. Even though for years I have seen him hardly at all, I know that this is true.’

Of Ronald’s physical qualities it is sufficient to say that he was 5 ft. 11 in. without boots, the legs and especially the thighs being long in proportion to his height, that he and

his youngest sister inherited their father's left-handedness and left-footedness.

The following impressions of our dear eldest daughter Hilda (Mrs. Ainley Walker) were written, as well as others on later pages, in the spring of 1917, a few months before she went to him, leaving with us, as he did, the ever-growing comfort of happy memories :—

‘How can I best give my picture of our beautiful fair-haired brother? His form and expression were the true index of his lovely spirit and he seemed to radiate brightness to all who were with him. I think that beyond his tall perfect figure and beautiful face the two things that struck me principally were his blue laughing eyes and the vivid yellow of his hair.

‘Of his nature, I think the most wonderful part of all was his absolute simplicity. Although I suppose he was one of the most popular men of his day he remained perfectly humble and unselfconscious and was never so happy as when at home ragging with his brother and sisters. It was in his nature to be simple and sweet, but I think that Margaret's influence on him helped to develop his stronger side, so that he soon overcame what was almost too great timidity and nervousness as a child.’

These natural tendencies, which we all remember, were in the end so completely suppressed that few can have known of their existence. His intimate friend Dick Dugdale¹ thought, however, that they explained the least successful element of Ronald's football in the early years, but in this he schooled himself with complete success and became an expert in the part of the game that more than any other demands resolution and courage.

It was said of Ronald at the time of his death that ‘he was the bravest of the brave’, and the tribute is all the truer because his courage was of the highest kind, being purely moral and intellectual and not in the least instinctive.

It will be seen that in his early years Ronald was highly

¹ The Rev. R. W. Dugdale, C.F., M.C., killed October 23, 1918, near Le Cateau.

emotional, being very easily moved to laughter or tears. I well remember how inconsolable he was—he was nearly nine at the time—when his brother Edward caught a Small Tortoise-shell butterfly that he too was anxious to catch. 'It was such a nice specimen', he kept saying as he lay on the ground crying.

The central feature in Ronald's character was what the Rev. William Temple has well called an 'understanding sympathy'.¹ One thing, one only, could extinguish his sympathy, and that was the want of sympathy, shown in disregard of the feelings of others.

Alfred Ollivant remembers his saying 'You can't work alongside a man all day without getting to love him'. That, at any rate, was the gist of what he said. It was a beautiful and characteristic remark, so simple and yet meaning so much—the end of all class jealousy and suspicion, the regeneration of society.

His warm sympathy and the delicacy with which he showed it appear in the words of one much older than himself who had suffered:—

'I knew him, although not very intimately, but he wrote to me and asked, "May I come and stay with you for a day or two?" and he came. It was a sweet and gentle way of showing silent sympathy which no one else would have thought of. I shall always treasure the memory of it.'

Of Ronald's power of friendship it is not necessary to say much here, as this book is full of it and of attempts to show what it meant to many lives. Some of his most intimate friends, like the Rev. William Temple, Capt. C. P. Evers, and the Rev. W. J. Carey, were much older than he, but it made no difference. As Capt. Evers says, 'I don't suppose that he reflected on our peculiar intimacy and the way that it created a complete equality in spite of our ages any more than I did.'

Ronald's pleasure in meeting an old friend is well

¹ In the sermon at the Memorial Service, St. Giles', Oxford, May 29, 1915, p. 12. Macmillan & Co., London.

described by Capt. W. T. Collier: 'The picture of him that will always remain clearest in my memory is his greeting of an old friend—"Why, it's dear old ——", generally followed by a hug or an embrace.'

Beautiful and pathetic memories of Ronald as a friend were written by Lt.-Col. Hubert Podmore, D.S.O., of the Northamptons, on Nov. 24, 1917, only a few weeks before he was killed, on Dec. 31, by an explosion of ammunition. His words show the modesty and unconsciousness of his own greatness spoken of in the notice of his death in *The Times* of Jan. 10, 1918. A few words in a letter to Janet lead us to believe that he was more to Ronald than he knew. Col. Podmore wrote:—

'I was not one of Ronald's *intimate* friends. I loved and admired him as every one did, but in my absurd self-consciousness was always fearing to claim a share in the real friendship of a boy and man who numbered among his friends so many better men than I. I did not understand then, as I think I do now, the wonderful large-heartedness of him, who had room for all and, as William Temple said in his memorial address, seemed to have something special for each. That was Ronald's secret, as I suppose it is with all great masters of friendship: though I wonder if there was ever such a master as he. I remember how often—on walking tours in the Lakes—a party of five or six perhaps—he would quite unobtrusively and with no sense of giving a favour, separate himself from his particular friends and walk a stage with me: it was the same at Romney with the Mission Camp, the same at school and up here at Oxford: he was always ready to give, and I seemed to have nothing to give in exchange. But he always had that unique power of making one think better of oneself as well as him after even five minutes spent in his company. And there are few men indeed of whom one can truthfully say that.'

Examples will be found in later pages of Ronald's power of bringing friendliness and peace into a heated atmosphere. And it was the same with his family; his presence always acted like magic when there was any friction or irritation or depression.

A dominant interest in serious things is apt to make a man rather overpowering to those with the same tastes, rather dull to those without them. Ronald had far too strong a sense of humour to be either the one or the other. Hilda remembered how he laughed when speaking of the Cavendish Club. Although it represented his own dearest hopes and ambitions, still he could not help seeing the humour of the unfathomable seriousness of it all—little knots of men in all the corners each planning some new social scheme! Thus he would laugh at himself as he did in his boyhood on an occasion well remembered by two members of the family.

One who is to be a leader of men must, however gentle and sympathetic, have in reserve the power of unmistakable command. I was first surprised by a glimpse of the hidden fire in the autumn of 1901,¹ when Ronald was not quite twelve. We had walked over from St. Helens to Seaview to hear the Clifford Essex Pierrots and had taken our seats on some tree-trunks in an open space at the back of the Assembly Room. Two or three village boys were making themselves rather a nuisance in the dim light, tumbling over the trunks and now and then against Ronald. He bore it patiently for a time and then suddenly turned upon them fiercely and drove them off. There was something in his tone and the flash of his eye which could not be mistaken, and they troubled us no more. It was a revelation of something new in him which arrested not only my attention but Hilda's as well, and we both found when we spoke of it fifteen years later, that it was perfectly distinct in our memories. But there was a characteristic sequel. Ronald had no sooner driven them off than he burst into a roar of laughter. The abrupt transition from anger to laughter is very clear in my memory. It was certainly at himself that he was laughing. The fact that he should have spoken like that was too much for his keen sense of humour.

¹ Mr. Clifford Essex has courteously assisted me in recovering this date with precision.

It is interesting to learn from this little incident that the characteristics of which his friend William Temple speaks were quite evident in early boyhood :—

‘In everything that Ronald did or said there was a wonderful buoyancy and freedom from self-consciousness. Hardly anything was ever done without some mark of his own intense humour. Now I am in the habit of saying that nearly all boys who subsequently make any real mark are priggish at about the time of leaving school and for a good part of their University career, and Ronnie is the only one who seems to me a quite definite exception, for he was certainly going to make a very big mark, and he was certainly free from priggishness at every moment.’

He would make fun of members of the family, including his parents, always getting laughter out of any little personal peculiarity, but getting it so that the one concerned joined in and was pleased to have been so keenly and yet so lovingly watched.

He much enjoyed the humour of the words, ‘The more I see of some people, the better I like my dog’, and he had them printed on a card in one of his rooms at Reading. But no one could have been less of a cynic than Ronald. Capt. C. P. Evers writes :—

‘I can’t remember ever hearing him say an unkind word about any one, and when he did criticize it was always done in the kindest and gentlest way. And he was equally appreciative of things as well as people. He had a wonderful capacity for enjoyment and for extracting innocent pleasure out of very simple things. He was never bored and he never grumbled—since it never occurred to him to think of his own personal comfort or convenience.’

Few young men can have crowded more work into the day and night than Ronald, but all the more because of it he loved to rush down to Oxford for a Commemoration ball, or a lawn-tennis tournament, or to take his boy and girl friends for a picnic on the Cherwell.

Although Ronald always looked well he never wasted any time or interest on clothes, and one of the records he

made was in speed of dressing. Once when I was playing golf with him and Edward at St. Helens I suddenly discovered that one stocking was inside the leg of my knickerbockers while the other was outside. When Ronald had finished laughing he said, 'Oh, father, I hope I shall be like you when I'm older!' Such a hopeless height of unconventionality of course transcends the ambition of the early twenties.

Naturally associated with his simplicity was a dislike for display, as shown in the tone of his letter to his mother describing the reception of royalty at Rugby.

He disliked anything which seemed to him in the least unnatural and affected. Thus he greatly preferred 'Boys' Club' to 'Lads' Club', and it was the same instinct which led him to decline the double name which the newspapers so constantly gave to him. The recognition of these qualities impelled one of his many clerical friends to write: 'It occurs to me that you are one of the people marked out by Providence to preserve me from "clericalism". If you ever detect its emergence, kindly lay me across your knee and take steps for its exorcism!'

In money matters Ronald was always extremely careful and businesslike. He lived simply and inexpensively, and, when buying things for himself, always liked to get his money's worth and strongly objected to being done in a bargain.

His aim was, as he told his friend 'Caesar' Carey, to spend as little as possible so as to accumulate funds for important objects. There can be no doubt that the first of these would have been the establishment of a large Boys' Club in Reading, and he had already noted down some of its main features. These fixed intentions, as well as the help he was able to give to the same cause during his brief possession of a considerable income, and the arrangements he made for his brother, were the expression of a large-minded generosity that was characteristic of him.

He was sensitive at receiving gifts and was at first rather

anxious on this account when it was proposed that he should enter the Reading business, but his uncle quickly recognized and admired his independent spirit and all misgivings soon disappeared.

We all remember with his youngest sister Janet (Mrs. C. P. Symonds) that Ronald

‘was devoted to duet-playing, and when he came home only for a few hours—and even in the last khaki days—we sat down to the piano, he the bass and one of us the treble, and played the same old pieces over and over again—Haydn’s Symphonies and many others that have been in the house from time immemorial.’

It was the same with Ronald and Dick Dugdale whenever they met at Oxford or St. Helens, and, when he was at Balliol, the longing for music used often to seize him and he would rush home to play on the schoolroom piano.

Although, as all his friends must have observed, Ronald was essentially a town dweller, who loved to live amongst men and would have felt stranded in a country-house as a permanent residence, no one enjoyed a walking- or cycling-tour more than he. His great love of scenery of all kinds could not often be indulged because of his busy life and the constant attractions of the seaside home at St. Helens. The beauty of the English lakes seemed to be a revelation to him when he first visited Grasmere in 1907, and wrote to Hilda, ‘I don’t think I ever imagined there could be such a lovely place’. And those who were with him know that the love of the snow mountains entered into his keen enjoyment of Alpine winter sports. Then, speaking of a landscape of the most opposite type, he wrote to his friend Keith Rae of how he had grown to love the beauty and wonder of the Romney Marsh. His delight at the view over the Weald from the Ridge at Woldingham—‘Surely this must be the finest view in the south of England’, he said—is among the memories of the day on which we said our last good-bye.

He had only one brief chance of studying Italian art, but it gripped him instantly, as his mother clearly saw on their journey together in the spring of 1913.

As regards his intellectual powers, Edward remembers that at Rugby

‘Ronald was highly industrious, and this would have accomplished much, but he was never extremely clever at his lessons. I can well remember his difficulty at chemical equations, when I used to talk over such matters with him after he had started chemistry, and when I was working for the Final School, or had just finished it. At Oxford he was very interested in his work for the Engineering School, and I remember his insisting, during the Manchester period, on the great value of theory in the practical side of the science. He was quite alive to the weakness of those who only knew and cared about the practice, and who further argued that theory was of no value.’

These memories suggest the marked intellectual development spoken of by his friends, G. C. Vassall and C. P. Evers. I have sometimes been surprised at his failure to grasp an explanation, and William Temple has evidently had the same experience in discussing theological questions with him. I believe that the reason for this is to be found in the immense keenness and variety of his interests. His life was such a glorious rush that he only had time to snatch at many things by the way, and so sometimes he got hold of them by the wrong end. But in no other way could he have impressed his friends as he did and in so short a life left behind him such a legacy of joy.

He loved work of all kinds and threw himself into it with the utmost energy and persistence. He could keep it up at high pressure for long hours without injury to his health, but once at Reading in 1913 he went too far and had to knock off for some weeks. His fondness for work was characteristic throughout his life. ‘I shall be glad to get back on Saturday to work again, as doing nothing is fearfully boring’, he wrote to his brother when isolated with rose-rash at Rugby. And it was not doing nothing but building operations of various kinds and the most

strenuous of sports and games that formed his recreation. 'We did have a lovely time in Switzerland', he wrote to us after his first winter sports at Morgins, in the winter of 1908-9. 'For a sheer holiday it is the most magnificent I can imagine. You simply can't do any work—I don't believe Father could—and I am sure it has done us a tremendous lot of good.'

Although Ronald loved games and played with all his might, he got most of the pleasure from the companionship. The majority of the papers in writing of him gave a very wrong impression by suppressing every side of his life except one. On this subject Capt. N. Whatley writes:—

'I met him first at dinner when he was Captain of the O.U.R.U.F.C. and what struck me most was his dislike of talking ordinary athletic shop. He never let football become anything more important than a glorious game. I was so sorry that the papers in writing of him after his death mentioned hardly anything but his football, which was such a very small part of his life.'

It is unnecessary to say more at this point. The little that he made of his own athletic triumphs will be obvious in many future pages, as well as his enthusiasm over the successes of his brother and sisters.

In politics Ronald was no party man. He would have supported the side which tried to do most for the social causes that were so dear to him. 'By their fruits ye shall know them' would always have been his rigid test. He agreed on the whole with the Liberal policy in social problems and hoped still more for what it might achieve in the future; therefore, so far as he thought about politics, he generally considered himself to be a Liberal. Mr. James Grant remembers his interest, when he was in Manchester, in a Reading bye-election, when Capt. L. O. Wilson, D.S.O., captured the seat from the Liberals. Mr. Grant recalls that Ronald 'was quite surprised when I expressed pleasure at the result, saying, "I thought you were one of us". Several times afterwards we chatted on politics, but

always with the greatest goodwill, and quite willing to differ.'

Then, not a year later, in the crisis of his country's fate, another aspect of politics was revealed to him when he found that his Conservative friends to a man were eager to volunteer, but that there were to him surprising and disturbing exceptions among the Liberals.

His friend Dick Dugdale remembered that Ronald talked with him about Parliament, and 'together we came to the conclusion that he could probably do more in Reading home politics than in the House'.

Capt. C. P. Evers writes:—

'I have heard him argue both for and against Liberal policy, at different times. In a general way, he was entirely in sympathy with social legislation for the working classes, but here again he was still just feeling his way. He felt very strongly that men who had worked long and faithfully at their job were not receiving, and were not likely to receive, adequate payment. He felt that the good workman deserved greater recognition and more ample chances of improving his position.

'His opinions were not the result of his own individual experience, which was of course very limited and only just beginning. It was rather the general situation which impressed him. I don't think he had yet arrived at any particular conclusions: he saw the evils on one side and the difficulties on the other.

'The boy problem interested him keenly. He felt that most good could be done on the moral side by getting hold of fellows when they were young. He was convinced that the greatest results could be achieved by personal influence and contact, and he succeeded, I am sure, for all the boys whom he came across loved him. He was not afraid to talk to boys—i.e. factory boys and the like—on serious subjects. At the School Mission Camp he was ready—in fact eager—to sacrifice much that was pleasant in order to sleep in a tent with the boys. He felt, rightly, that it was the way to get to know them and influence them. And he realized that ultimately the appeal to such boys must be based on Religion put to them in a way that they could really understand and appreciate.

'We used to talk about the evils of blind-alley occupa-

tions, and I remember how pleased he was when I told him that some money had been left to the Notting Hill clubs which would enable us to apprentice some of our boys to useful trades, instead of allowing them to become van boys or paper sellers.'

William Temple's memories of Ronald's views on social questions will be found in the Reading period; and a large part of this volume is made up by an account, much of it in Ronald's own words, of his doings in Boys' Clubs—the central interest of his life.

Ronald rarely spoke about religion to members of the family. His spirit was the very reverse of the revivalist type, of the man who will drag in religion on every occasion. And in his religion as in everything else there was the mark of his ever-present humour, as when he wrote to Janet of his first talk on serious subjects at the Balliol Boys' Club and how the boys 'were fairly quiet—that is to say they only whistled, and talked, and threw chairs about'. And before another address to Club boys his friend Dick Dugdale remembered his humorous expression of despair as he said, 'I don't know what on earth to say to them'. But with his friends, the Rev. W. J. Carey and especially the Rev. W. Temple, he often discussed his difficulties and talked with the utmost freedom and naturalness, as may be inferred from his theological conversation in the bath after the English-Irish match in 1914.

'In religious doubts', wrote R. W. Dugdale, 'he generally went to Billy Temple as I used myself. But his doubts were theoretical: his religion practical. His difficulties were intellectual and he never reconciled the two sides, although he longed to do so. But the intellectual difficulties never undermined his religious beliefs.'

William Temple has written the following impression of Ronald's personality and religion, of which he can speak more surely than any other friend:—

'Ronnie had—or rather was—a genius for evoking affection. This does not seem in memory to be one

quality of his composition, but to be its very essence. Plato might have argued that, as many things and persons are called lovable, there must be some "Absolute lovable" which these things and persons imitate or resemble; if he had argued so, and had then met Ronnie he would have had to say that the Absolute Lovable had literally appeared before him. Everything else seemed subordinate to this; his skill in games, his self-sacrifice for the boys in the clubs he helped to manage, his hopes of reform in the industrial world based on the growth of understanding and sympathy between employers and employed, all seem part of that extraordinary lovableness—its modes of manifestation and action. He was entirely of the Greek, as against the Hebrew, type of excellence.¹ I never detected in him any sense of an effort to be virtuous. He was magnetic to everything good, drawing it to him and into him; everything mean or evil was repulsive to him, and he rejected it not so much with moral reprobation as with a kind of disgust. People were at their best in his company—even coarse people—just because low speech or action in his company would have been like a drunken shout in the middle of a symphony, and there is something stronger than conscience which prevents people from being consciously blatant beyond a certain point.

'I put these general remarks first, because I know that some others—and expect very many others—had in their relations with Ronnie an experience unique in their lives. For myself I know that it is so; one can never say, perhaps, that one loves one friend more than any other, for love is essentially individual and one loves each for what he is; but in this friendship there was something more arrestingly unique than in others. One of its chief peculiarities makes any adequate description totally impossible. There was throughout a completeness of understanding which made it unnecessary that we should explain our minds to each other. I felt that I knew what he would think and how he would act on any given occasion. The result was that while we had many serious interests in common, we hardly

¹ Mr. Temple tells me that he was here referring to 'the contrast on which Matthew Arnold insisted so much, especially, I think, in "Culture and Anarchy". The Greek type is (normally) easy, graceful, attractive: the Hebrew type is more earnest and struggling, evoking respect more than affection. It is not far from the difference between the Once-Born and the Twice-Born which James made familiar.'

ever spoke about them ; when they were in our minds we said nothing—but there was intercourse all the while. The only real exception to this is to be found in religious doctrine and the effort to relate religious experience to the rest of our experience and to the scientific view of the world ; but here Ronnie did nothing but ask questions, leaving me to do the talking, until suddenly he put in a remark which showed that however puzzling he found the intellectual problems, his own religious experience was fuller than my own. He would ask about prayer and how it could be expected to make any difference except to one's self, and when I had done my best to explain, I found that he was actually using prayer—intercessory prayer—more constantly than I was. Or he would ask about the Incarnation ; and was the whole of God in Christ or only some elements of the Godhead ? What was the relation of the Incarnation to the Presence of Christ in the Communion ?—and the like ; and suddenly I found that in practice he relied more intimately upon Christ as a Divine Friend than I had ever learnt to do.

‘As far as I can judge from my own conversations with him his mind was never interested in religious questions until he got to Oxford. In this respect he and I were direct opposites of one another. While I was still at school I was corresponding with my father about the eternity of matter, free-will, whether the Perfect Man would be in himself—and apart from any Incarnation—Divine ; no doubt there was some germinal experience behind all this, but my *data* have always been in the first instance the experience of other people, and my own apprehension has usually been intellectual first and spiritual afterwards. With Ronnie this was inverted. He had a very full personal experience before his mind was exercised upon religious questions at all. As he had meanwhile been acquiring a view of the world based on—or chiefly influenced by—his scientific studies, the difficulty of adjustment was very great. As a matter of fact, he held a view of things—never consciously constructed but gradually formed as his mind worked over a larger and larger sphere—which left no room for prayer or any real Incarnation or his own spiritual experience. This last was never a material for his thought until the other was fairly set ; as a result his religious doctrine, when he came to form one, was a curious tangle, and at the time of his death he had not got far in straightening it out. This, however,

was always a relatively superficial matter ; he was far too clear-eyed to deny the certainties of his own experience, and the fitting of them into an intellectual scheme was for him not much more than an engrossing jig-saw puzzle.

‘When we met in Manchester in July, 1914, he was much upset because in my sermon I had said—hardly doing more than paraphrase St. John—that a man who loves any one, in so far dwells in God and God in him. Ronnie pointed out that many agnostics and utterly irreligious people were capable of love (which was of course the whole point of my remark). I remember thinking how odd it was that one who in practice knew so much of faith and love should find difficulty here ; but at the time he professed to find it the removal of a great perplexity when I told him that many people thus dwell in God without knowing it. I think the tangle of his theology was just beginning to worry him, and he was in the phase of wondering if one could “believe” if one had no rational justification for one’s belief.’

His elder sister Margaret (Mrs. Maxwell Garnett) remembers that Ronald, in one of their rare talks on religious subjects—it was during his residence in Manchester—expressed opinions which at the time surprised and a little distressed her. He said he could quite understand a man being willing to give up his life for some great good to the world, and that therefore the death of Jesus Christ did not appeal to him as the transcendent sacrifice it appeared to many people. His sister remembers his saying that he felt, if the world would be made better by it, he himself would be willing to die. It is probable that Ronald in this conversation was recalling what he had learnt from William Temple, who has written :—

‘I am afraid I can’t find in my recollection any talks with Ronnie on precisely the question of “Death and Redemption”. But I am bound to have expressed to him my own conviction that if our Lord’s death is taken merely as a historical episode, it cannot be regarded as so far transcending other sacrifices by other heroes as to take the place given to it in the Christian scheme. It is only when taken as a climax of a life always utterly devoted, and again only when this whole Life and Death are taken as

the revelation once for all of the eternal nature and activity of God, that the Atonement begins to be intelligible or credible. This is why St. John—who regards every incident in our Lord's life as a flash of the eternal light (as his Prologue makes plain)—is to me the chief guide in theology. No doubt I said all this at some time, probably at many times, to Ronnie; and probably it chimed in with his own thoughts and he raised no objection, so that we had no real discussion of the matter.'

The impressions of a dear Balliol friend of about the same age as Ronald are placed next to those of the older friend to whom he talked so freely of his difficulties and to whom he owed so much. At the time of Ronald's death Stephen Reiss was ill with scarlet fever and being nursed by his mother, and they talked and thought about him together. Later in the year when Keith Rae had been killed before he could record his memories of his friend, I wrote to Stephen Reiss and asked for his help. His reply was written in pencil from the Front on Sept. 19, 1915, less than a month before he too gave his life for the liberty of the world:—

'I wish that I could give a more adequate reply to your request. I had such a tremendous respect and love for Ronald and yet I find so little that I can write which will in any way express my feelings for him or will not outrage my very vivid memories of him.

'As I sat down this morning and wondered what I could tell you, my mind seemed naturally to turn to St. Paul's summary of the gifts of the Spirit in Galatians v.

'He was just the personification of joy—that delicious joy that makes all who come near it happy. I remember seeing Billy Collier just when Ronald had knocked himself up at Reading and before he was sent away to Italy. He was to have come with us on the river but had been advised to stay in bed. Billy told me that he was in excellent spirits but looking rather seedy. I remember saying then—"It will be tragic the day when Ronald is not in good spirits." His was the joy that made people smile when they met him.

'Then I remember soon after he came to Balliol he was sitting in Keith Rae's rooms and Keith asked him why he

was taking his Preliminary Science Exam. before —. He laughed and said, "Because I am cleverer than —". It was charmingly modest. He knew he was the cleverer and he knew there was nothing to boast about in that. He just stated the fact.

'He had the same modesty regarding his athletic qualities. He told me of some small Marlborough boy who had written for his autograph. He answered by telling him not to be "a little idiot" but to spend his time better than by worshipping athletics.

'It all sprang, as you know, from a wonderful reverence that made him keenly sensitive to all that was beautiful or lovable in others. He had such an extraordinary appreciation for their good qualities. As Walter Carey said, he had that supreme modesty that made him think every one better than himself. I remember especially, when staying with him at Reading, how eloquent he was about an old man who used to work next to him in the factory and talk to him about social questions and industrial history, and how he used to make him feel "an awful worm", and he would spend his spare time—very little in Reading, I think—reading Marshall's *Economics* so as to understand things better and discuss them more easily with the old man at the factory.

'Then I never understood the meaning of "temperance" before I met Ronald. I had always hated the word and had associated it with a nasal twang and dullness. But Ronald could enjoy everything in a way I had never known before and yet he never got over-excited or "overdid it". And when he was enjoying himself most he was always observant of the enjoyment of others.

'He was always the same. He was no Naaman waiting for great occasions. I remember his ready assent when I told him one day that I thought the Balliol Club boys gained their chief religious inspiration from playing games. And the idea had to a great extent come to me from knowing him. It was when playing games that his joy, his self-restraint, and his impulsive fondness for others found their most splendid expression.

'His religion was just an outpouring of the spirit. It coloured all that he did. It made me see that true religion expressed itself in conduct, and I understood Christ's words, "If ye love me keep my commandments".

'About his religion he was extraordinarily sincere. He would never join a bible circle because he was afraid

that others might think he was more earnest than he imagined himself to be. He hated giving publicity to his views, not because he was ashamed of them but because he was so intensely modest that he took an almost cynical view of his own ideas and was so sincere that he was terrified of cant and dreaded expressing views that he did not put into practice. He realized so well that belief is not purely intellectual.

'But at the same time, as you know, he held a very strong and simple faith and was always pleased to discuss religious matters quite in private and with his friends.'

From his youngest sister, Janet :—

'Only three times did he speak to me of religious matters. First at the time of my Confirmation in 1908; during a walk home from the flint implements in Priory Bay he told me of his difficulty in keeping up the keenness and enthusiasm stimulated in him at the time of his Confirmation three years before. Then many years later, during the early days of his adoption by Uncle George, when the strangeness of the situation was still upon him, we were spending a week-end at Marlston, and he told me of his firm belief in Christianity. Since the first time we spoke of this subject he had passed through his College life and had had, he said, many doubts; indeed he had at one time given up saying his prayers. But the doubts were conquered and he came out of the conflict a convinced believer in Christianity. I cannot remember the details of our last talk on the subject. To his family he was reticent about these matters, but he gained much from his many talks with his friends William Temple, "Caesar" Carey, and Dick Dugdale, all clergymen.

'As Ronald grew older and as his interest lay more and more in the lives of working men and boys, so did the religious side of his nature come more to the front. From his own experience he found, as he once told me, that a Boys' Club without religion was a failure. He introduced prayers into his Reading Boys' Club, and I was present at one of his first efforts. He told me that on the first night the boys behaved very badly, but they soon saw that he was in earnest and learnt to keep quiet. He would first play the hymn, then read a portion of the New Testament, and lastly say a few prayers, one or two of which were extempore.'

The only sermon found among Ronald's papers, that on 'Spirit and Truth', was preached by William Temple before the University of Cambridge, and printed in full in the *Guardian* for Oct. 20, 1911. Ronald was then in his last term at Balliol, but it was settled that he should begin his work at Reading early in the following year, and I do not doubt that he felt a special force in the words quoted below :—

'For a man to choose his life's work for any consideration other than that of the service he can render is the greatest sin that any one can commit—far greater than lapses into indulgence or vice—for it is the deliberate withdrawal of most of his time from the obedience of God.'

In writing about the home life which I believe was the chief environmental influence brought to bear upon Ronald, as it is in English life as a whole, I run the risk of appearing both egotistical and commonplace. The risk must be faced. I believe that these influences counted for much, and that, under different conditions, his nervous, timid nature would have developed very differently. To become what he was he had to be gradually strengthened without losing any of his tenderness. Under harder conditions his sensitive nature would probably have shielded itself beneath a covering of reserve and he would have lost much of his power over others. If, on the other hand, he had been favoured above the other children, he might have become self-centred and have yielded to some of the dangers of athletic success.

Looking back on the happy days of our children's youth, I think I may say that our unconscious aim was to be the elder brother and sister. There was certainly no conscious intention—only a yielding to the delight of being with them and being one with them. And as time went on, and equally unconsciously, we were led to become in some ways the younger brother and sister, and to learn from them. Family life must lose a part of its greatest joy when this is not so; and yet it is not always easy.

Every age has its lessons to teach, but the parents' minds are already stored with the impressions of their own age and so are apt to be unreceptive and dulled to the inspiration of new thoughts and ideals. How different is it with our children, and we must try to see with their clear unbiassed vision, and accept and help on the best that the new age has to offer.

I have often thought that the natural and inevitable contrast between the receptive powers of the old and the young gives its true interpretation to the words: 'I came not to bring peace on earth but a sword', words uttered by Him whose sublime teachings meant, if they were to be received, the profound transformation of mankind.

'And so it is in all the ages with every high creative thought which cuts deep into "the general heart of mankind"'. It must bring when it comes division and pain, setting the hearts of the fathers against the children and the children against the fathers.'¹

Our generation has not been tried, as others have been, by such sudden epoch-making change—I do not speak of the Great War, for its influence upon us has happily been unifying and not dividing—but gradual change there has been, epoch-making we may hope, and there has been need, in order to reach the fullest sympathy, for parents to learn from their children. I do not believe that the school-boys and undergraduates of my time were essentially different from or inferior to those of the succeeding generation, yet I had never even heard of interests which to Ronald and his friends stood before everything else. They simply did not exist. There were no Boys' Clubs or Boy Scouts, which now seem to offer the most hopeful solution of the great social problem of the age, that of making us 'all members one of another'. In these days—and it has been so for many years past—our children at the most receptive age, both boys and girls, are encouraged to in-

¹ *Charles Darwin and the Origin of Species*, Poulton, London, 1909, P. 55.

terest themselves in these movements and to help them on—such flexibility at any rate have our educational systems shown. And this means a great deal when we remember how recent and how profound is the change that has come upon us.

Prof. H. S. Holland, that bright spirit whose loss we are mourning, traces the origin of the movement, of which Boys' Clubs are probably the most fruitful element, to two Balliol men, Thomas Hill Green and Arnold Toynbee, and after them to Samuel Barnett.

T. H. Green 'had taught us the obligations which bound the University to the larger life outside'. Then, into the midst of the beginnings which had been stirred

'there shot the radiant figure of Arnold Toynbee. . . . He gave himself from the political economy of the schools to the democracy of the streets. He went out to meet it, and to help it, and to teach it; and in doing this he broke his heart and lost his life. Something must be done that should prevent such a memory from dying, so his friends felt, and Samuel Barnett was the man who saw what could be done.'¹

In talking of Boys' Clubs with Ronald I came to feel—a most strangely sweet feeling for a parent—a curious youth and immaturity in contrast with the large experience which, young as he was, had been his. For he had taken part in Boys' Camps for nine consecutive summers when the Reading Club finished its outing by the sea at New Romney four days before the outbreak of war, and, after the first year or two, Boys' Clubs had become the central interest of his life, an interest which he owed to Rugby.

With Ronald's mother it was somewhat different. The opportunities and endeavours of the home in which she was brought up and the beneficent activities of her uncle, William Isaac Palmer, prepared her beforehand for Ronald's chief interest and made it less of a new world to her than it was to me. Her chief effort of adjustment to something

¹ 'Samuel Barnett and the Growth of the Settlements', in *A Bundle of Memories*, 1915, pp. 89, 90.

new and strange must have been in the region of athletics, for I certainly remember an unfulfilled prediction uttered after watching a game of Rugby football in the Parks: 'I'm sure I shall never let a son of mine play football!' I have often thought of the words when the speaker of them was adding to her treasured pile of press-cuttings or arranging for her seat at an international match.

The signs and symbols of affection between parents and children were not abandoned as Ronald grew up. As it had been between my father and me so it was between me and my sons. In neither generation could any point be recognized in which a love that grew with the passing years was willing to be denied its symbolic expression. The last time we kissed each other was in Piccadilly Circus where we said 'Good-bye', and I turned away with a heavy heart to return to Oxford, he to Chelmsford for the last few days in England. And not only in this but in other ways he was always the same to his parents. On any of his visits to Oxford—from his work at Reading or Manchester or from his training at Chelmsford—he would warmly embrace us, always calling us by some endearing diminutive, literally most inappropriate to his father, but seeming to be all the sweeter on that account.

The sum of loss I have not reckoned yet,
 I cannot tell.
 For ever it was morning when we met,
 Night when we bid farewell.

Mary Coleridge's perfect lines sum up memories of being held close to that strong beautiful body and of the sweet absurdity of his words—memories too of his last sight of us after a visit home as he went off on his motor-cycle or in his car and would always wave his hand far down the road, for he knew we were still waiting and watching at the gate. He knew well how much we all loved him. There were no doubts. It is a consoling thought.

The most important influence brought to bear on Ronald was, I believe, the fact that he was one of a large family, or what in these days is called a large family. Almost equally

important were the great individual differences between the members. Unfortunately we mere human beings cannot emulate the fairy mother of whom Lewis Carroll says in *Phantasmagoria* :—

The notion had occurred to her,
That children would be happier,
If they were taught to vary.

But we can at any rate help them to preserve and develop the individuality which nature has bestowed, and in doing this we shall help them in another way—by creating in the whole family the most favourable conditions for the development of each one of them. This ideal can only be reached when the family is a society of equals, in which each child feels that it is so and that it is not necessary to strive for it.

In two respects Ronald was favoured by chance. I am sure that it was of special value to him that he was born between two sisters. It was also important that he was one of a family of which all the members were athletic much beyond the average.

It is of course impossible to speak of likeness between children, or between them and their parents, as if it were a matter of certainty which would command universal agreement. But nearly every one remarked on the extraordinary resemblance which Ronald bore to his elder sister Margaret. In his first term at Balliol he told us that a friend had said, 'I saw your double in the town to-day, only it was a lady'. And Margaret was often recognized by the crowd as we were leaving the ground after some great match. The remarkable likeness between them was brought out with special force in the charades of which we were all so fond, when the brother would sometimes appear dressed as the sister, the sister as the brother, or when at a costume dinner at Wokefield in the Christmas Vacation of 1908 they walked in together as Roman brothers. This strong likeness was accompanied by special bonds of sympathy, although it is hardly possible to make

any distinction, so warm was the love that united all five children. It is obvious, however, that there must always be some peculiar affinity between those children in a family who are next each other in age. Life unfolds for the younger so largely through the eyes of the elder that the unconscious pupil will always hold specially dear and intimate memories of the unconscious teacher. And what was true of Ronald in relation to his elder sister was of course also true of his younger sister in relation to him.

The forceful influence of his elder sister was just what was required by his nervous emotional temperament, and when the treatment was rather drastic there was always comfort to be found in the sympathy of the younger. What his sisters were to Ronald will appear on many a page, but I think the sweetest indication of all is that delightful Peter-Pan-like letter written from Rugby when his mother and two elder sisters had sailed for Cape Town, telling Janet, not yet thirteen, that he supposed she was the mother now.

Then in a young family the special admiration of one child is apt to be countered by a healthy scepticism, as shown in a memory of the summer of 1896. A lady friend who was staying with the children while we were away was asked by Margaret,

‘Do you think Ronald beautiful?’

‘Oh yes, very.’

‘So they all say. *I don't think so at all.*’

Memories of Ronald's childhood are especially associated with St. Helens, because we were there together in holiday times. At Oxford there was always so much to be done and the opportunities were fewer. Chief of these were the meals when the children—at one time they were at five different schools—met and compared their goings on, getting tremendous fun out of the little adventures. Thus Ronald once told how a woman had stopped him on his way to school and asked for help in carrying a parcel, a story at once capped by Margaret, who had been asked to tie up a shoe! Little things, yet how fruitful of laughter

and interest to tellers and hearers. For each one was really interested in anything that the others had to tell, knew too that the others were equally pleased to hear of his or her experiences. Thus, without any teaching or effort, there grew up a delightfully friendly and equal form of family talk in which each was happy in being listened to and happy in giving way to others. And sometimes the incidents were really thrilling, as when Ronald, then at the Dragon School, was stopped by an older boy with the awe-inspiring words:—

‘It’s not usual for young Dragons to be seen with hoops. However, as I like you I won’t take it from you.’

It was the same with the accounts of years written by each member of the family and read to all the others on or about New Year’s Eve. Although the writing was sometimes rather an effort in the middle of the holidays, we all got a great deal of fun out of the occasion, as will appear in some of the quotations. The custom certainly makes for family unity and furnishes convincing evidence of the moulding power of the home life: the things that above all became part of themselves were the things that the children did together.

And there are other advantages. I have often heard parents regret that they did not know what were their boys’ strongest interests, or indeed whether they had any special interests at all. But encourage a boy to write down what he remembers of the past year, not as a task, but to bear his part as one of the family—ambitious to amuse and interest no less than glad to be amused and interested—and a parent will very soon find out what are his real tastes.

And so too in letter-writing: each was spurred to the effort partly by the love of doing it but even more by the knowledge that only in this way were the longed-for letters from others to be gained. In these letters, of which many are printed in later pages, will best be realized the love and joy which grew out of the varied influences and at times the rough-and-tumble of family life.

I feel strongly that, quite apart from their inestimable value in keeping up all the old family intimacies, the letters home are most important in education, and I believe that Ronald owed to them much of his power in expressing himself easily and rapidly. The power of writing English is thus acquired in the same way that speech is acquired—by the free use of a faculty bringing advance and improvement, as an incidental result and not as the direct aim. In fact, improvement as the direct aim was rather strongly resented by one of the girls, who wrote:—

‘I am sorry if I am not grimaltical in my letters home, but you must forgive it because if I felt I had to think of what I had to put, I should hate writing the letters.’

The instinct was quite right: her letters would become ‘grimaltical’ in time, and this, because she loved writing them, without any loss of ease and freshness in style.

A large part of Ronald’s early letters to his brother and sisters is filled with pleading for answers—pleading and sometimes upbraiding. His letters often end in ‘write soon’, repeated in a crescendo.

Ronald wrote with great speed and facility: comparing his accounts of the years one sees that he suddenly attained his mature handwriting in 1905 when he was sixteen. He always performed his full share and generally more than his share of the family bargain.

‘Frightfully busy’, he wrote to Janet from Rugby in 1908. ‘Written about 100,000 letters but can’t miss you, so must make it 100,001.’ And to his brother, with more numerical accuracy, ‘I am simply eating up paper writing to you all. This is the tenth letter I have written and I must write one more.’

The letters on both sides were generally full of the ordinary daily happenings of work and play—the little things especially—full, too, of anticipations of meeting in the holidays and the games and fun they were going to have together. Speaking of the little things, constant reference was made to the family jokes which are so

different from others in that, starting from nothing, they continually gain by repetition.

The little family traditions which always spring up in a happy home were peculiarly dear to Ronald. He was always one of the first to remind the others of them—the family walk to Port Meadow on the afternoon of Christmas Day, the party to the pantomime in the same holidays.

The family is and has long been the prime force in British education, but I do not think that it has been generally realized how immensely its power has been strengthened during the last generation by the ever-growing tendency towards an open-air life and the free play which sisters as well as brothers have had in it. Croquet, the halting first step, was followed by a very real one when lawn tennis became general in the seventies, and this by a mighty leap when girls began to make free use of the bicycle in the nineties.

I have often been led to contrast my own youth with that of my sons and to realize how much they have gained by the fact that nearly all their sports and amusements have been shared with their sisters. Some few sports such as riding and skating were allowed to girls in my boyhood, but think of all that they missed. Hardly a girl could swim in those days, alpine winter sports were unheard of, for a girl to bicycle or play hockey or cricket would have been thought indelicate. As for sleeping in the open air, it was considered dangerous even for boys, and I remember my father being quite angry with me when I made my bed under a pear-tree on the lawn one very hot summer night.

In 1905 and 1906 our family and friends played hockey against united Sandown and Shanklin. In one of those long stretches of a game during which my defence of our goal was a sinecure, an enthusiastic spectator remarked to me:—

‘Of course we’ve no chance against your team; you feed your women!’

Another change which has strengthened the influence

of family life is the fact that now girls as well as boys go to schools where they learn loyalty to the community and to 'play the game', creating too an additional and enduring bond between sisters who have been school-fellows. With brother and sister there is all the interest of comparing the differences in detail added to the strong sympathy in things essential.

Whenever thoughts such as these arise in our family the memory of Hilda and her unswerving loyalty and devotion to Wycombe Abbey is always with us. And sympathy between brother and sister reminds me of the day when Janet came to leave the same much-loved school and went to Ronald for comfort; I found her sitting on his knees crying almost as soon as she reached home. She so rarely broke down that I was somewhat taken aback, but 'it is such a lovely place' was the all-sufficient explanation.

Thus British family life, always the predominant force in shaping the lives of the young, has become under modern conditions an overwhelming power—a power that may sometimes become a danger. When a family is swayed by a spirit of self-indulgence and self-assertion, or of class feeling and arrogance, the children are likely to give way to the temptations or to resist the broadening influences of Public School and University life. I use these words deliberately of our Public Schools in spite of much that has been written in recent years; for apart from the intellectual side, which it must be admitted is often weak, apart too from the splendid public spirit and loyalty which all admit, the opportunity of meeting in the democracy of school life numbers of boys with different experiences, different interests, and a different outlook is certainly broadening and educating in a high degree.

The age which came to an end with the Great War was extraordinarily complex. When the attention was directed to one set of currents all seemed well, when it was focussed upon another set we seemed to be sweeping headlong to disaster. On the one side was a healthy love of work and

play, on the other unexampled luxury; in this direction class hatred, in the other men giving their happiest hours to promoting friendliness and sympathy throughout the whole community, and meeting too with a wonderful response. To all these and other tendencies of the age, good and bad, family life has acted as a mighty intensifier, and family life will be the greatest of the forces to which we must look for reconstruction after the war.

II

CHILDHOOD: 1889-1897

I have known and admired him ever since as a little boy he sat on my knees to look at the dancing class. I have watched his triumphs at football and seen him with his sisters at home. He has been to me an ideal, the finest young fellow I knew.—Dr. A. G. VERNON HARCOURT, writing, May 8, 1915, to his wife.

RONALD was born on September 12, 1889, at Wykeham House, Oxford, where his brother and sisters were also born.

The family when he joined it included Edward, aged six, Hilda, nearly five, Margaret, two and two months. Just three years later Janet was born.

We named him Ronald because it was such a beautiful name. Later on, when 'Ronald' and more often 'Ronnie' became the most familiar of names on the Iffley Road at Oxford, at Twickenham, or at the Queen's Club, we realized that the choice had been something of an inspiration. For surely those who knowing him loved him, as well as the crowds who loved without knowing, all felt that the name and the man fitted each other, that no other name could have recalled so vividly the picture of the fair-haired Three-Quarter.

He was baptized on October 18 at St. Philip and St. James's Church, by my old friend and tutor, the late Rev. W. Hawker Hughes, of Jesus College, who had also baptized his brother. His godparents were Miss H. O'B. Owen (Mrs. F. S. Boas), the Rev. Walter Lock, Warden of Keble College, and his uncle, the late Lewis Palmer.

The attempt to write the story of Ronald's childhood must inevitably take the form of a series of disconnected pictures; but each of these will tell something of him and

all together will I hope show what he really was. This period seems to me of great interest, not only because, in Mrs. Henry Sidgwick's words, 'Education in its widest and fullest sense' begins 'as it must with the earliest infancy',¹ but because to understand fully a child at this age is the surest means of distinguishing between the inherent and the acquired elements in a character.

When Ronald was about fifteen months old he came into the care of a gentle, bright, and sympathetic nurse, who had already known him for some little time; for it was the happiness of the children whenever they were with her that led us to persuade her to give up another position and devote all her time to them. And although Edith was married less than a year later, when Ronald was rather over two, she clearly remembers the presence of much that was characteristic throughout his life; so that when Ronald's friends speak of his being 'always the same', the words express a truth greater than they knew. Sunny memories of Ronald as a baby have come from the happy African home where his nurse of twenty-five years before thinks of him, thinks too with pride of her splendid sons who fought for the cause of freedom in South-West Africa, then in the last German possession on the continent, and finally in Europe.

'Of course to me he was always a baby, good as he was lovely. He very soon made great friends with me and was a big rogue, always with a bright smile. Before he could talk he made me understand he wanted me to have his cot near my bed, to hold his dear little hand, but he soon got over his little fears.

'He was always obedient, too, and would wait so patiently for the five minutes I always had him to play in the morning, and when the permission was given it was surprising how he would balance on his hands and turn a big somersault on to my bed without the least fear.

'I also remember at St. Helens he would not put his

¹ Presidential Address to Section L, Report Brit. Assoc., 1915, p. 732.

little feet in the sea for some time, and one day he asked me in his way, saying "Egie's hand".

'I can remember he would always give away his chocolate and forget himself. On one occasion he had one left, forgetting me, and he looked at it, saying, "Never mind, Egie, you can have a nibble". Also he would not kill flies as one of his sisters often did; he would say, "Poor fly wants to go home to Mummie".

'He was very fond of flowers, and used to try and find the very tiny ones, and give them to me. He was not too fond of toys, but would carry a flower in his hand the whole time whilst out in his pram.

'I feel rather proud I taught him his first prayer, "Gentle Jesus", and he could say it before his sister Margaret, and after the first time he always wanted to say it several times a day.

'He was also remarkably intelligent, and would always want to play the older games with the others; in the dressing-up games he would sit quite nicely and try not to smile. Hilda was very fond of having church in the nursery on Sundays, and the little darling would take part in it all; he loved the hymn, "There's a Friend for Little Children", and would continually say, "Again, again". At one time he had a very troublesome little rash, and, poor little chap, would say, "O dear 'pots Egie", and then say "Sing", and it had to be "Friend for Little Children".

When Ronald was about two years old he devised for himself a simple form of negative sentence. He had got the affirmative one all right, and he knew very well what 'no' meant. What could be simpler than to tack on 'no' at the end of an affirmative sentence? One day at Christmas, 1891, when we were staying at The Acacias, Reading, he was evidently offended with his nurse, Fraulein Hebak, who had succeeded Edith, and sat at tea with his face persistently turned away from her.

'Me want to look at Fraulein—no', he said with emphasis when she tried to appease him. It was really most effective, the sentence being rapidly spoken, then a slight pause followed by an emphatic, deep-toned, and unmistakable 'no'—so effective indeed that Margaret adopted it from him.

One charming little saying comes back from the earliest years. The paraffin lamps at St. Helens Cottage were new to him, and when he saw one with a large white globe lighted, he exclaimed 'Oh! pitty sun!'

'He was a pretty son', said Edith.

The incidents I remember of those earliest years chiefly illustrate Ronald's nervousness and extreme sensitiveness. I happened to come into the nursery at St. Helens when Edith was teaching the children a wonderful game, new to them and to me, founded on 'battles long ago'. Two lines were formed facing each other, and then the first advancing sang:—

Are you ready for a fight?
Are you ready for a fight?
We're the Roman soldiers.

Then the other line advancing sang:—

Yes, we're ready for a fight;
Yes, we're ready for a fight;
We're the British soldiers.

And then the fight began—a very gentle fight with Edith in command of one army and controlling the other, but in a moment Ronald had left the ranks and run to 'Egie' for protection, holding her dress and crying bitterly.

Ronald was also distressed by other than physical causes. He would begin to cry if any one wanted to look at his bent little finger—a slight deformity chiefly marked on the right side—or if he was asked to try how far he could straighten it.

The following incident shows, I think, an unusually sensitive appreciation of the links of understanding by which human beings are bound together. At about this age—two or three—he used to come into my room while I was dressing in the morning. He would stand at the corner of a case which was just the right height for him and, holding the pencil in his left hand, make vigorous attempts to draw.

'It's all kibbered', he observed off-hand one day, as a matter of mild general interest.

'Covered?' I said, getting a hint from the state of the paper.

'NO, KIBBERED', very decidedly, and in evident distress.

'Do you mean covered?' I said again, with some want of tact, but really without any light.

'NO, KIBBERED', he said, with great stress on the 'kibb', and beginning to cry heartily.

Of course it was most painful to have to put up with such an uncomprehending father—one who couldn't recognize the obvious 'scribbled' when he heard so praiseworthy an approach to it—but I am sure that none of the other children would have wept because of it.

A picture of Ronald at two-and-a-half can be recalled from the impression he made on our friend Miss Grace I. Parsons, of St. Hugh's Hall, in the Easter Vacation of 1892:—

'He had the most lovely colouring imaginable—a rose-leaf complexion, soft, slightly waving golden hair, and blue eyes of extraordinary clearness and brightness.

'He was coming up the garden-path at St. Helens Cottage, and by way of greeting drew my attention to the "Pitty p'imrose", a bunch of which he was holding in his hand.

'I remember him too as a remarkably affectionate child. He had a caressing way of gently stroking one's face, which was most endearing.

'Altogether he made a deep impression on me as the most beautiful, attractive, and loving child I have ever met. I can see him quite well, but it is difficult to convey my impressions in words. I never felt so enthusiastic an admiration for a child either before or since. I felt at the time he was unique in his beauty and attractiveness.'

It is interesting that with all his nervousness Ronald should have been quite free from shyness. A few years later he was sometimes shy of people in the mass, but of friendly individuals never.

Ronald's godmother, Mrs. Boas, retains vivid memories of his first game of hockey:—

'I was married in Dec. 1892, and Teddie Poulton

was one of my pupils for the last part of my happy school life among my boys. One afternoon in my last term, when the days were getting chilly (so it must have been about October or November), I went to tea at Wykeham House, with Teddie and his family. We were all keen about hockey, and Mr. Poulton was very good about playing with us. Mrs. Poulton was out when I arrived, but he was in the garden with Teddie and Hilda, and we began a vigorous game. I think Teddie and I played Hilda and her father.

‘Presently there came a cheery shout, and Ronald trotted in, fresh from his walk, and clad in white fluffy garments; he was always, at that age, like a personification of Spring, with his wonderful beauty and grace. “Me, too”, he shouted, and brandished a stick he had picked up. His father laughed, and said “Come on, then!” and he charged in among us, shouting and laughing, and hitting out vigorously at the ball.

‘In a few minutes came the inevitable result; down he fell, knocked over by the players who were all much bigger than he was, and who stopped to look at the small white figure tumbled among them.

‘There was a moment’s pause, then he gathered himself up, and scrambled to his feet with a delighted chuckle.

‘“My ten (turn) now!” he called triumphantly, and fell upon the ball with eager strokes.

‘“Yes”, said his father, laughing, “let him hit it now. Don’t you see he thinks it the rule of the game that when you have been knocked down you have a free hit?”’

Ronald’s athletic distinction was only traceable at this time and for many years later in his delight in movement, and the beauty and grace of his movements, remarked by many at the time. ‘I love to see him run’, summed up the impressions of a lady friend who met him in the Parks; and we can never forget how he would act when he went into the garden after breakfast. It was always the same: he walked faster and faster until, about half-way down the path he began to run, ending up with a spurt as fast as he could go. There was no competition: he was alone and had no object in view but the joy of swift movement for its own sake—and this almost as soon as he could run at all.

The first clear indication that I remember of Ronald's intense interest in manual work was given when a large rocking-horse was sent to the children by their grandfather in Reading. Ronald was the first to see it, and he came up to the nursery landing and said to the others in rather awe-struck tones,

'There's a great bogey-man horse in the playroom!'

But when the case of open boarding was being removed he sat by me enthralled at the fascination of seeing the nails drawn out, and continually pointing to fresh ones with 'There's another, father'. I remember realizing at the time that this must be the expression of an innate tendency, and my surprise and delight at its appearance so early. I have no means of certainly fixing the date, but am confident that he was not over three at the time.

The second indication can be placed with precision. With the help of some workmen I had been digging a reservoir in the garden at St. Helens and holding up the clay sides with concrete retaining walls. One sunny morning in September 1893, when the men were away, Ronald sat at the edge of the little precipice—the wall was 10 ft. high—looking on with rapt attention, and I feel sure helping whenever it was possible, while I removed the boarding from one of these walls of which the concrete had sufficiently set. We were alone, I working and he eagerly watching, through the whole of the lovely autumn morning. Most boys of four would probably be interested in such work, but I do not think that many would keep up their interest for so long. The picture is very clear in my memory as the first of all the long, happy days spent in work together, and leading his strong natural inclination onward to a realization of the charm as well as the dignity of labour.

Memories of Ronald's timidity and sensitiveness, and of his friendliness towards the friendly, come back to me from the later years of his childhood.

He was always very shy of trespassing or of going



RONALD

Three months under four years old.

From photographs by Hills & Saunders of Oxford, June 3, 1893.

anywhere or doing anything if, as he readily imagined, 'a man looked angry at me'.

I remember an example of his sensitiveness in the summer of 1894, when he was nearly five, and our dear American friends, Professor and Mrs. Osborn and their children, were staying with us at St. Helens. Mrs. Osborn had brought for him from New York a pretty little garment which he recognized as different from those worn here, and the struggle between his natural courtesy and equally natural dread of appearing conspicuous nearly brought him to tears; but Mrs. Osborn quickly realized and withdrew the cause of his distress.

Two pictures of Ronald are associated with my friend Sir Ray Lankester, who lived between 1891 and 1896 at a house in the Bradmore Road back to back with Wykeham House. I made some rock-work steps to help in getting over the party-wall dividing the ends of our gardens, and often used to take the children over to see my friend. Ronald was probably about four at the time of which Miss Fay Lankester writes:—

'I recollect that dear, beautiful boy climbing over the wall in a blue smock and coming up into Ray's house where I was sitting at the window, and getting on to my knees. He said, "I think you must be the Professor's wife", and I kissed him and thought he was the dearest, sweetest thing I had ever seen in my life. Of course he grew up to be so splendid and such a joy and pride to you.'

He was probably a little older, about six, when we looked in upon Professor Lankester and found him entertaining his mother and an American lady, who, when she saw Ronald, began to express, in talking about him and even to him, a rather unrestrained admiration. He bore it quietly, appearing not to notice it, but as we went back he told me how much he liked one of the ladies.

'Not the one who was so proud of my eyes', he was careful to explain.

It was the same instinct which in later years led him

to be shy of a partner at a dance who would talk to him about football.

A few of his quaint or charming sayings remain in my memory.

'Father, I saw a butterfly with a burnt wing in the Parks to-day', was his description of that lovely messenger of spring—the Orange-tip.

When asked what he intended to be, 'I want to be a father' was his reply, summing up the memories of happy hours spent together at play, and more especially at work, in the garden of St. Helens Cottage.

'It won't rain long because it's crooked rain', was the inference from his childhood's observations in meteorology, which, at least in England, is sure to be the first of the sciences to receive attention.

Ronald's first school was Miss Cobb's and Miss Leather's (Mrs. Powell) kindergarten in the Polstead Road. He went there in the autumn of 1894, when he was five, and stayed for two years. Miss Cobb writes:—

'It is his face I remember so vividly—his sweet bright smile and very fair hair. I do not think that he cried at school, but he certainly appeared to be very sensitive. I think it is not too much to say that he seemed highly strung. I know that I felt it would be wrong to press him at all at his work—that his physical development was then all-important.'

Mrs. Powell writes:—

'I remember your boy perfectly at Miss Cobb's school. I can see his little figure now—full of life and energy, and such a bright, merry, sunburnt little face—always full of fun and mischief. I cannot remember anything about his lessons, but his sparkling vivacity is very clearly imprinted on my mind even after so many years.'

After the two years at Miss Cobb's Ronald went, in September 1896, for a year to the Misses Owen's school where his brother had been.

Miss M. E. O'B. Owen writes :—

' My recollection of him is that he was always keen about his work, and I remember particularly that he wrote very nicely for such a little boy. Ronald's voice is another thing we always remember. It was very sweet, and fuller than is often the case in such a young boy. Of course he took no leading part in the school from being so young ; but we always remember him as one of the manliest and best-toned boys we ever had. He always worked well and even then showed promise of his future as an athlete, and was, as always, liked by every one. In fact I have no remembrance of having to reprove him for anything. I always think his character was as near being perfect as a mortal being's can be.

' One of the things which showed how utterly unspoiled he was by his successes and popularity was the way in which he used to come and play in our old boys' hockey matches. Between 1900 and 1911 he played seven times ; and he always played as if it was a real pleasure although our boys are very young. And he showed just the same keenness as if he was playing in an International match. This spirit in the old boys is a very great help to us with each rising generation. I remember in December 1906, when Ronald had kindly played as captain for the school and Teddie for the old boys, walking home with them, and the eagerness with which they discussed the best way of arranging the match the next year. When that year came they both played again, only reversed their positions.'

The intimate friendship and affection between Ronald and his cousin Eustace Palmer was begun in this period of his life. Eustace and his cousin Gerald Barry matriculated at Trinity in the autumn of 1896 and at once became warm friends of all our children.

This close friendship, begun when he was seven, was destined to have an important bearing on Ronald's life, and if he had lived the two cousins would have been constantly associated in the control of a great business.

The following memories begin towards the end of the period 1893 to 1897 but stretch on into Ronald's Dragon years, forming a natural link between these two stages of his life.

From his Mother.

'As far as I can remember Ronald never needed punishment. I never remember him really naughty; he was very sensitive, and a mere look of disapproval was sufficient. His joyous disposition showed itself very early. I remember so well going into the nursery during a meal, and seeing him and Janet sitting opposite to each other, both laughing and setting each other on to laugh. He was very easy to teach, and he never seemed to find any difficulty in learning the Sunday collect, which I always expected the children to repeat to me during our Sunday lesson.'

From Hilda.

'My picture of him at three or four was as a beautiful little boy, but decidedly a cry-baby. Then later, I see him, always with Margaret, having their supper together and seeing who could eat the largest mouthful of mustard, putting gravel in each other's beds and being anything but models of behaviour in church, so that they came out before the sermon even when quite big children. They used to come to the station to see me off to school and ran up and down the platform and stood on the footboard as the train was moving and other goings on, and I was so proud when the other girls noticed them and thought how jolly they were. I always think of those two together as children—playing and ragging and having great jokes—and it was the companionship with a sister a little older than himself, a very vigorous and athletic girl and absolutely brimming over with fun, which both kept him so simple and prevented his natural sensitiveness from getting too strong a place in his character.'

And now that she is no longer with us it is right to speak of the strong, sweet influence which Hilda herself exercised over Ronald and indeed over all who met her. Ronald's gifts as a leader are well known, but within the family he and the other children all yielded to her gentle but vigorous leadership. Nor did she give up her power when the brothers and sisters had scattered into homes of their own. Even in the weakness of illness she was still the leader, and family schemes with some kind object in view were still suggested and organized by her.

From Janet.

‘My first definite memories of Ronald centre round the time that Evelyn came to us—the Christmas after he was seven, and I four.

‘Ronald developed a love of carpentering at a very early age. When he was seven he made me a doll’s house, dividing the box taken for the purpose into rooms which he papered and carpeted. When he was eleven he improved on his first efforts, and introduced stairs with bannisters and doors which opened, the whole being papered again and painted white. I have still this little doll’s house.

‘He was an exceptionally nervous little boy and always cried very easily. Margaret’s great delight was to make him dissolve into tears and then I always wept to keep him company.

‘He had a sweeter disposition than most boys of his age, and hated inflicting pain on animals. Of course he engaged in all the games and sports of his age, and amongst them catapulting. I remember how he confided to me that once he had killed a sparrow, and he was obviously very much upset.’

A few months after Evelyn’s arrival the Diamond Jubilee (1897) was celebrated, and she remembers that when we took the three elder children to London for the procession, she took the two younger into the Parks to see the children’s fête and tea arranged by the city. She clearly remembers Ronald’s great anxiety lest there should not be enough tea for such huge numbers and how he insisted on inspecting the preparations for himself to make sure!

When he was punished by being sent to bed earlier than usual he never could go to sleep until the difference with Evelyn had been put right.

‘I know it’s all for my good’, he would say; ‘I know that I deserve it; but do forgive me.’

All this sounds priggish and unnatural, but with Ronald it was the very reverse. It was quite spontaneous and meant a real and deep concern for the bonds which united

him to others: it was the expression of his central and essential self.

For this reason—his extreme sensitiveness to a word or expression of disapproval—neither of us ever punished him, a remarkable thing considering how much he was with us as a child. The same is nearly but not quite true of our other children. The occasions were so rare that I think I can recollect all with which I was personally concerned.

I remember hearing Ronald say in answer to some slight rebuke:—

‘Oh! Mother, don’t call me cross!’

He meant, of course, ‘Don’t be cross with me’, but the way he put it seemed to be an unconscious emphasis of the thing he really dreaded, the endangering of the bond between them: whether the threat came from one side or the other mattered little.

The offences for which Evelyn had to punish him were also characteristic: the commonest were due to impatience in dressing, when he would seek the aid of scissors in dealing with the button-holes for which starch had more than its usual affinity. From the first he made the most of his life. Always he worked and played with all his might, and slept soundly for as long as he could. The uninteresting phases that lay between he cut down to the finest point. His great friend among the masters at Rugby says that among his other records was that for fast dressing, and long before he went to Rugby he had noted down his times. Thus in a note-book of his I find that during six days in July and August, 1901, the maximum time occupied in undressing was fifty-five seconds, the minimum, twenty; in his bath and drying himself, the maximum three and a half minutes, the minimum two minutes twenty-five seconds; in dressing, the maximum five minutes, the minimum two minutes five seconds. It was no doubt the first possession of a watch which made him so keen to time himself and others as well, for his note-book includes the length of sermons and other parts of the Church services.

III

THE OXFORD PREPARATORY SCHOOL: 1897-1903

His presence is like a gleam of sunshine.—*Headmaster's Report*, Apr. 4, 1903.

You cannot think how universally Ronnie Poulton's death was felt in the army. Everyone, both high and low, spoke of it. He was a great Dragon.—Bde. Maj. C. C. LUCAS, G.H.Q. British Army in the Field (*Draconian*, Apr. 1916, p. 1849).

IN September 1897, when he was just eight, Ronald entered the O.P.S. as a day-boy and became a Dragon, thus continuing the family tradition, for his brother had left only the term before to go to Rugby.

The healthy, breezy Oxford Preparatory School—the name 'Dragon' was invented by the boys themselves in the early days—had been in existence for just twenty years when Ronald went there. It was founded when the sudden liberation of the University society from a mediaeval celibacy had led to inevitable and insistent results. The first headmaster, the Rev. A. E. Clarke, died in 1886 and was succeeded by the present head, Mr. C. C. Lynam—one who prides himself on shorter hours and more holidays than other schools, who gives the boys more independence and makes it easy for them to see their parents in term time, who hates to be called 'Sir' every half-minute and prefers to be the 'Skipper'.¹

Capt. W. H. Moberly, D.S.O., remembers that one of the greatest on the Roll of Honour of the Old Dragons, Capt. Hugh Sidgwick, once spoke at an O. D. Dinner of the distinctive spirit and ethos of the O.P.S., and sought to explain how it was that

'it makes an appeal and invokes a loyalty similar in kind

¹ For a fuller statement of the Skipper's sound principles, see the *Draconian* for Aug. 1901, pp. 517, 518.

to those of the best public schools.' He found the answer in 'the Skipper's refusal to force his boys into one or other of two or three conventional moulds, in his positive encouragement of originality, in the opportunity given to boys to discover their own peculiar interests and gifts; so that, if you were to collect a number of Old Boys in after-life and to ask what was the common stamp that the school had set on them, you would be able to point to no single machine-made quality—but you might observe that every one was very much himself' (*Draconian*, Dec. 1917, p. 3095).

I will speak of athletics first, not because it is most important, but because Ronald was most widely known as an athlete, and the period of life at which his powers began to appear and the rate of their development are of much interest. Until Ronald was about 11½ his successes in any of the games and sports were in no way exceptional. His friends, looking back on that time and thinking of what he became, are astonished at the contrast between his powers before and after the spring of 1901. Thus Capt. W. T. Collier, R.A.M.C., writes:—

'I was just a month younger than Ronald, for I was born Oct. 12, 1889. One of my earliest recollections at the O.P.S. is of running against him and Claude Hardy in the 100 yards to decide who should represent the school in the under 10 or 11 race. Claude Hardy was first, and I just beat Ronald for second place. I think this is interesting because he had certainly come into his own in the athletic world before he left the school, and it must have been in the last year or two that his powers really began to develop.'

Major Claude Hardy, R.G.A., is a little younger than Capt. Collier, but all three friends were within three months of the same age. It will be found in the records of the *Draconian* that Claude was at first always ahead, but after the spring of 1901 Ronald developed so rapidly that in a year's time he had become the first athlete in the school, as shown by his performance in the inter-school sports in the spring of 1902, while from this time up to the end of July 1903, when he left, he was making

school records in the most varied games and sports, and had thus at a bound gained the exceptional position he never lost. This sudden increase of power was accompanied by sudden increase of weight and height, as shown in the tabular statements of the *Draconian*. The rapidity of Ronald's growth continued after he left the O.P.S., for a Rugby record shows that at 14½ his height and weight were those of an average boy two years older, and his chest girth that of a boy of 18.

If the curve of Ronald's growth be typical for a boy with exceptional powers—and there is no reason to doubt it—then for the full development of such powers the food supply during the critical period must be greater than that of the average boy.

In spite of this deferred development of power it has been shown that from his earliest childhood there was something which attracted general attention and admiration and held the promise of all that Ronald was to be as an athlete.

Considering the games and sports in order, I first take Rugby football, the regular winter game at the O.P.S. since the opening of the school. Ronald seems to have been quite happy in the game at the lower levels, for he wrote in a very short birthday letter to his brother on Sept. 30, 1900: 'I am sorry to say there is no news. I am getting on well with football but there is no news so I will fill up the rest with kisses,' and so thoroughly was this done that the crosses occupy more space than the writing, leaving room however at the end for the most important part of all. 'P.S.—Please write soon.'

Ronald must have made his mark directly he entered the XV, for I remember one of the masters saying in the Michaelmas Term of 1901: 'He has the regular Rugby swerve', and in the account of that year I wrote, 'Ronald has become a famous three-quarter at football, so I am told by many of his teachers'. His play in the autumn term of this year is prominently noticed in the *Draconian*, where, speaking of the match against Lambrook on

Nov. 16, won by the Dragons 29-0, the critic remarked: 'Of the three-quarters I think Poulton was the best on the day, he was very good at taking passes and very fast when he got under weigh.' The account of the match shows that he was even then an unselfish player responsible for tries made by others.

The comments on his play in the last match of 1901, against Bilton Grange II, won 12-9, give the first expression to an oft-repeated criticism:—

'Poulton made two or three capital runs but he must learn to go for an enemy who has the ball as skilfully and eagerly as, having the ball himself, he scoots away from the enemy.'

Ronald referred to this match and the one against Lambrook in a letter, Nov. 24, 1901, to Hilda at Wycombe Abbey School:—

'I am writing to you because of your birthday. I have now got my colours at football and am very pleased. We shall play a match against Bilton Grange shortly which is quite near to Rugby so I may be able to see him [his brother]. Next term we are going to do a Greek play, I hope it will be nice. We are at present doing "Lucian" about the adventures of some men who get wrecked on an island, with rivers of wine, and whirled into the moon; it is very interesting but hard. We are having quite a hard frost here now and last week some of the boys skated but it thawed in the middle of the week. Teddie comes up to his exams. in about 10 days, isn't it nice? We are doing *Macbeth* for a play this year, but Mr. Lynam cannot find a boy for *Macbeth*. Aunt Alice (Palmer) has sent to ask us what we should like for Christmas and Father suggested that I should have a working-bench which you can get any size in London and are not very expensive. We played a match against Lambrook and I enjoyed myself very much indeed. Mother has given me a new bag for my football things, it is ripping. We had such a nice lecture at school given by Mrs. Woods on Canada which was very successful and sarcastic. I must stop now.

'Your loving brother.

'P.S. I. WRITE SOON. P.S. II. Have not I written a long letter? P.S. III. Goodbye. P.S. IV. x x x x x x x x x x.'

A year later, in 1902, in his last season's play as a Dragon, he made 15 tries, a school record, on Oct. 11, against St. Edward's (Juniors). In the account of the return match he was again reminded that 'defence is a part of the game'. In another match of the same term his 'good left-footers' seem to have been useful. Looking back on his play for the O.P.S. Mr. G. C. Vassall writes:—

'His 15 tries *v.* St. Edward's are most often talked about, but his effort *v.* Dunchurch in the same term is what I remember best, and was the surest sign of what he was to be as a football player.'

Ronald was given his colours in the Cricket XI in the summer of 1901. He spoke of it in a letter to his brother at Rugby: 'I have got my colours now: mine are blue and yellow, but I believe yours were green and yellow.' The letter continues to tell of school doings and other doings mixed together with delightful inconsequence, as for example:—

'Yesterday we played Cothill and beat them, it is the first real match we have won. We had a ripping bath afterwards. I hope you will give me one of your puss-moths. I had four Poplar Hawk chrysalides but while I was away it came out and died, the other three died just as they were coming out:'

then by way of picnics and Wytham strawberry feast—back again to school. An earlier letter to his brother in the summer of 1899 spoke of a visit to Youlbury, a name that recalls many happy memories:—

'I have been doing prep. at school for a week. We went to Boar's Hill yesterday. Hilda and Margaret and Violet Stark went on a bicycle and Janet went in the dog-cart with Mr. Evans, and Miss Brown and I walked the Devil's Back Bone way. When we got to Carfax we asked the tram man if you had to go along by Christ Church or along High Street, and Miss Brown said: "Which is the way to the Devil's Back Bone—the Water Works?" "The what?" said the man, and he laughed loudly; of course he did not know what Miss Brown meant. Mr. Evans has got an

owl which lives by Mr. Evans's dog. I have forgotten the name.'

The children had learnt to call the old and now replaced curved footbridge over the railway at the waterworks by the name used in my undergraduate days.

To return to cricket, Ronald did not do much in his first season, but the *Draconian* says of him in 1902, especially referring to a 34 not out against Summerfields on July 19: 'A steady bat and very sound field, who showed on one occasion that he could play a really good forcing game.'

He was captain of the Eleven in 1903, and Mr. G. C. Vassall remembers that his powers of leadership were noticeable even then, before he was fourteen:—

'The cricket "characters" in the *Draconian* don't do him justice, especially as a captain. He always got the best out of his side and they would have followed him anywhere. Some of his innings in his last term against time were wonderful; especially *v.* Cothill, 60 odd in half an hour to win a match.

'He was always the life and soul of the party when we went by train or in a brake to play cricket matches. So much so that we used to offer him 6*d.* if he could last for five minutes without speaking! Sometimes the rest of us would go on talking; sometimes we would all sit silent, watch in hand—but he never won the 6*d.*'

The *Draconian* speaks of him in 1903 as 'the best bat and field in the team', and his total of 335 and average of 33.5 runs were school records. He gained the bat given in memory of Alfred Spurling, O.D., killed in the Boer War.

In hockey Ronald was in his last year the most successful O.P.S. player, making 10 goals out of the 24 (against 3) scored by the Dragons in three matches in March 1903. As early as March 1901 he had been one of an 'A' team which defeated the Christ Church Choir School by 12-0.

As regards his athletic performance at the O.P.S., Ronald took part for the first time in the Inter-School Sports held

in March 1901, and was second (at 3 ft. 11 in.) in the high jump under 12.

In the Summer Sports of that year Ronald, although beaten by Claude in the 100 yards under 12, was very successful in other events, with the best all-round record of the day.

1902. In the Inter-School Sports Ronald made the highest score for the Dragons (7 out of 25). In the Summer Sports his 'record performances under 13' are spoken of in the *Draconian*. His 15 ft. 7 in. in the broad jump was a school record.

Mr. G. C. Vassall writes:—

'I remember his surprise and delight when I showed him that he must jump high if he wanted to jump far. He was sceptical to begin with and finally made me change into running shorts and spiked shoes. "I can see better what your feet and legs and knees are doing, like that," he said. Next day he came running up with: "It's quite true, I can do nearly two feet more."'

1903. In the Inter-School Sports the *Draconian* considered that Ronald's was the best performance. He was first in the high jump under 14 (4 ft. 3½ in., in a high wind); second in the 100 yards under 14; first in the 440 yards (67 sec.) under 14; and second in the open broad jump.

In the gymnastic competition between the boarders and day-boys Ronald obtained the third highest marks: 32, to 37 gained by two boys.

The Headmaster's Report on Games and Gymnastics at Easter 1903 was: 'Very good indeed. Takes his success with a most becoming modesty.'

Ronald's last Summer Sports included a new school record in the broad jump (16 ft. 11 in.) as well as the first place in the 100 yards, quarter mile, and high jump (4 ft. 6 in.). He was awarded the Athletic Cup, and, on the day when he received his prizes, from the hand of his mother, I was told by the Headmaster that he was 'the best all-round athlete who had ever been at the school'.

The Reports on Ronald's work show keenness and

brightness throughout, and a development in the last two or three years that kept pace with his athletics. He was most successful in the English essays on historical subjects. Two of his very early efforts, 'Mary, Queen of Scots' and some verses on the 'Discovery of America', he kept in his scrap-book with the title 'A Prize Poem and Essay!!' His mathematics were also praised in the Reports.

Ronald also received the second of two prizes offered to the O.P.S. by his father for a natural history collection with notes, to be made in the summer of 1900. He sent in a collection of butterflies, and was awarded a prize because of the full and careful data accompanying the specimens. Later on he added a 'Prize Coll.' label to each, distinguishing it from the rest of his collection.

Ronald was a keen collector. He and his sister Margaret encouraged each other in the development of an omnivorous taste, as is evident from the following letter to his brother at Rugby. The suggestion in it is delicately made for a child of nine and a half:—

March 7, 1899. 'I have not much to say but I wanted to ask you about some coins in your Apotheke which is hanging above my bed. Margaret and I collect coins in our museum in the boys room. It is very tidy; and we collect butterflies and moths and magazines and crests and stamps and shells and tortus shells and eggs and coins.'

Ronald often sang and recited in the O.P.S. concerts. The Report for April 1903 speaks of his recitation as excellent and he received a prize for it at the end of the Summer Term.

In his accounts of the years Ronald does not say much about his work, but there is an amusing reference to one of the masters. He was speaking of the Autumn Term of 1902: 'I was for the first time wholly under Hum's [Mr. A. E. Lynam's] mastership. I found [it] quite different to what I expected. I expected great sufferings for me, but he certainly did not give it.'

Speaking of one of the outside hockey matches early in 1903 he wrote of their opponents: 'It was a curious school,

chiefly comprised of Dukes and Lords, very luxurious and expensive.'

'As to cricket', he wrote of the 1903 season, 'we played fourteen matches of which we only lost two. In the first six matches, I played very badly, having an average of only six, which is very bad for the captain of the eleven. But in the remaining matches I had better luck. We bathed as usual, though the water was much below its normal temperature. The sports at the end of the term were favoured by a very fine day. I gained a good deal of money in the sports and also a cup. The next day we had the speech day, my last day as a schoolboy at the O.P.S., but

The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
and I had to go to a Public School some time. But I was very sorry to leave. I received three book prizes.'

I keep to the last one of the finest things done at the O.P.S. and that is the acting of a play of Shakespeare just after the Christmas holidays every year. The interest spreads far and wide, infecting not only the whole school but younger brothers, sisters, parents, governesses, nurses, Oxford friends; also old Dragons who are lucky enough to visit the familiar long-loved haunt at this electric moment, who write prologues and are sometimes even allowed to shine in minor parts. But this is the day of the young Dragons and their sisters, and no important part will be given elsewhere. Yet in spite of this, the Skipper contrives to make the parents and all the rest feel as if they were part of the show, with every right to be very proud of it. And this complacency is not confined to the Shakespeare play, though it is especially evident on that great occasion; it is felt in everything, work and sport, that is done at the O.P.S. It is one great secret of O.P.S. success.

So the great day comes round every January in accordance with the Skipper's sound idea 'that an acting knowledge of at least one play of the greatest playwright of our own, or any other country, should form part of the education of every English boy'. And thus the Dragons have met beforehand and continue to meet the sensible criticism that

the beauty of Shakespeare's plays is often lost in an excessive study of the notes upon them.

There is a most appealing incongruity in a Caesar of at most fourteen extending his slender arm as he declaims:—

Have I in conquest stretched so far mine arm
To be afraid to tell greybeards the truth?

Or in a stern bearded warrior of the same age hurling at the trembling messenger:—

The devil damn thee black, thou cream-faced loon!

'Not at all a nice story' was the comment of a sister's nurse on the play in which the line occurs, reminding one of the Victorian old lady who said of *Antony and Cleopatra*:—

'How unlike the home-life of our own beloved sovereign!'

Ronald, who had acted minor parts in the plays of 1901 and 1902, was, in his last year, asked to take Mark Antony. In 1896, when the same play had been chosen as the first to be acted in the newly built hall, his brother was Julius Caesar. The following criticism of Ronald's part appeared in the *Draconian* (Apr. 1903, pp. 608, 609):—

'As regards the performers there can be little doubt that Mark Antony was *facile princeps*. I never remember to have seen, even at the O.P.S., anything to equal his splendid conception of this, one of the greatest of Shakespeare's characters; the perfect taste of his elocution, his command of pathos and of irony and his beautiful self-restraint were indeed amazing in a boy of his age.'

Ronald was at the time thirteen and four months. In his account of 1903 very little was made of his own doings. 'I was given the part of Antony. The play itself went off very well and the audience were very crowded.'

Below is the Prologue—to *As you Like It*, played in January 1918—written by Frank Sidgwick, an Old Dragon (*Draconian*, Apr. 1918, p. 4043):—

Welcome, all friends! Once more we tread the boards,
Shepherds and ladies, fools and exiled lords,

Trusting that you with us may still rejoice
 To hear the April notes of Shakespeare's voice.
 Please you a little parody forgive,
 And let me ask 'Who dies, if Shakespeare live?'

Never again will one¹ who loved his plays,
 Wrote us our Prologues, gave the critic's praise—
 Never again may he rejoin us here
 To watch the scene and give us actors cheer,
 Never again: but though the voice be gone,
 The spirit hovers, bidding us 'Carry on'.

Nor he alone, but all our loved and lost
 Call us to effort, without count of cost.
 Take we the burden they were bidden drop;
 Only the coward and the fool will stop.
 Can we not find, then, if we humbly try,
 More in this play than meets the ear or eye?
 —Reason to love our England more and more,
 Some spur to make us better than of yore?
 Come, to our duties, for the play's the thing.
 Company, 'shun! God save our gracious King!

It would be a great mistake to suppose that because boys leave a school at about fourteen the effects are likely to be unimportant; far from it, they may be lifelong. For over twenty years I have tried to help and have been helped by young British naturalists in many parts of the Empire, especially Africa. Among the keenest of these are two who in helping me came to know each other and to realize that when they were about ten years old they had been at the same school in Oxford and with a master, the Rev. J. W. B. Bell, who had done his best to encourage their fine latent powers of observation, and their love of living beings. It cannot be doubted, I think, that their whole lives have been coloured by this early education—in the strict meaning of the word, a true leading out of the qualities that were in them.

¹ Capt. Hugh Sidgwick, killed at the front in September 1917 one of the 64 Old Dragons who had fallen in the Great War at the time of the beautiful Memorial Service on June 30, 1918—by the end of the War 75, but the fallen O.D.'s in the French Army are not yet known.

And this thought brings me back to the O.P.S. and the words of Capt. J. C. B. Gamlen in a little sermon to the school when on leave in the Michaelmas Term of 1917:—

‘When I was a Dragon, we thought we had great traditions, and we had, but they were not nearly so great as yours to-day. For, in our time, the older Dragons who had gone out into the world, and who had built up the school traditions for us, had had no such opportunities for behaving greatly as have been given by this great war. With you it is different. To take but three names, you have before you the examples of Charles Fisher [Lieut. R.N.V.R., H.M.S. *Invincible*, lost in the Jutland battle], and Ronald Poulton, and Hugh Sidgwick.¹ I choose these names, not necessarily because they are the greatest, but because I knew these men. Now, to belong to the school which produced these men is just as though you belonged to a school which had produced Sir Richard Grenville, and Sir Walter Raleigh, and Sir Philip Sydney. Think of these men, and of the other O.D.’s who have fallen, in that way. Let them be your constant example, and, in order to profit fully from that example, try to learn anything you can about them. Try to discover what manner of men they were; there are plenty of people who knew them intimately and can tell you all about them; about their life here, and afterwards, and their great successes, and their friends, and, most of all, about their views of life, and the way in which they illustrated those views by giving their lives in the greatest of all causes. If you learn this lesson well, you, too, may one day, in some great crisis, have the privilege of copying their example. You cannot do more than that.’ (*Draconian*, Dec. 1917, p. 4000.)

A few months after Capt. Gamlen’s address was spoken, Lieut. Martin H. Collier went for his last voyage, leaving the most touching proof of the influence of school life in early years. The words were written, on first receiving the command of an over-seas submarine in April 1917, as

¹ In the same number of the *Draconian*, p. 3095, Capt. W. H. Moberly, D.S.O., also writes of Hugh Sidgwick: ‘If I were asked to illustrate the contribution of the O.P.S. to English life, and now to England’s sacrifice, I should be content to couple his name to that of Ronald Poulton and to let the O.P.S. be judged by them.’

part of a letter to his father and mother to be opened in the event of his death.

‘I don’t think I fear Death; there has been too much of it during the last two and a half years to retain its old awe and prestige.

‘I have never talked much of Religion, but I think you know I believe very firmly in the After-life, and look forward to meeting all my friends, Berry, Spurling, Ronald Poulton, Denis O’Sullivan, and many others who have already “passed over”—and you when you come.’

With the exception of the first name, probably that of a Naval friend, all were Dragons. Alfred Spurling was killed in the Boer War, his brother Frank, also an O.D., in the Great War, but many months after Lieut. Collier wrote his letter; Denis died while still at the school. Martin, a fine football player who often met Ronald on the field, was always proud that it was he who persuaded F. E. Oakeley, the International who fell early in the war, to take up the Rugby game instead of Association.

The Dragon period must be completed by saying something of the holidays. St. Helens Cottage at St. Helens, on the north-east coast of the Isle of Wight, came into our possession at the end of 1888, about a year before Ronald was born, and the work and play there had an important influence on his life.

It was here and at this period that he began to help in the various building operations, and how much they meant to him may be realized from his accounts of the years. No one reading his story of the work done more than eight months before, at Easter 1902, could doubt that it was written by one with a very special aptitude for engineering or some such practical profession. Another point comes out. His words show that, at this early age, he wrote as a comrade, with all the interest and sense of responsibility of one who sees the work of his hands growing before him.

The details of the work would be wearisome, but something must be said of his bright willingness to help. Often

in order to finish off a piece of work, or use up material that was already prepared, he would get up at six or earlier—once, for a special occasion in 1900, at 4.45—and work with me before breakfast. I always asked him if he wished to do this and he was always willing and indeed eager. Then the last mornings were ever the same. We worked up to the last minute the evening before and got up at six or earlier to clean and put away all our tools and gear ready for the next holidays.

A bit of work in the summer of 1900 is very clear in my memory. For several days we had been interrupted by rain. At last, on Aug. 27, we declined to be stopped any longer. Ronald and I got up early and, in spite of rain nearly all day, built the whole of the retaining wall seen above the seat in the accompanying illustration, and faced the exposed surface with pebbles.

His love of building is shown in many a letter, and especially in his regret when the increasing pressure of scientific work encroached more and more upon the time I could give to the strenuous recreations of St. Helens. This was always distressing to him, although the old hours could never have been continued as he grew older and came with his friends for shorter periods, needing concentrated play rather than work. But he always regretted it and loved to think of the old times. This was the meaning of a lament many years later that 'things are not as they were', and of his letter to me from Salisbury during the Army Manœuvres of 1910: 'I am looking forward to seeing you all. It will be tremendous fun. And you mustn't work very much while we are all together.' And his friend Dick Dugdale remembered that he 'used to get very worried about the way you never would take a rest, even when you were there'. And always when he had been out with his friends or for any other reason was not working with me he would come round to see what had been done, and, whatever the progress, his encouraging words were the same, words that are ever with me—'O father, you *have* got on'. And I know well that the



WALL, BUILT BY RONALD AND HIS FATHER

At St. Helens Cottage, Aug. 27, 1900. The open two-foot rule gives the scale. About $\frac{1}{3}$ of the length, on the R. side was built by Ronald. From a photograph by A. W. Wade of St. Helens, I. W.

sense of all that we had done together was with him when he wrote on April 22, 1915, a fortnight before he was killed: 'You would simply love all the schemes for improvements, and making dug-outs and improvements for drainage'.

But the holidays were never entirely devoted to building operations and other such work. Much strenuous activity was expended in games, as many a page of this book will show. The favourite was hide-and-seek, and the garden was very largely planned so as to increase the variety and interest of the game. I have also a picture in my mind of Ronald and Janet looking at each other after breakfast or lunch and nodding sometimes towards the lawn for some wild form of croquet; sometimes towards the fives court on the other side of the house for a kind of squash rackets. Thus without wasting a moment in words they reached agreement and started a game. But hide-and-seek was the great game at St. Helens, enjoyed by our children more, I feel sure, than any Inter-University or International contest. The object of the hidiers was to gain a base on the lower lawn without being touched. The lower lawn itself might only be entered by certain channels which the seekers attempted to guard but were liable to be distracted by concerted rushes. Running and dodging and above all combination were the essentials of both attack and defence; hiding played a very minor part in the game. All the strategic parts of the garden were known by special names, rather puzzling to friends who joined in the game for the first time. The excitement of capture and evading capture was terrific, well expressed by Margaret, who, when caught in a place from which escape was impossible exclaimed:—

'I feel as if I could break the world in two!'

Quite apart from and beyond the building operations and games in the garden, the swimming and golf, there were the interesting features near at hand:—the pool of the only tidal mill George Darwin ever saw, at the bottom of the field the other side of the road, the flint implements of Priory Bay to the north, and the Tertiary Strata of White-

cliff Bay to the south. It has been an ideal spot for the holidays of children with a natural taste for work and play in the open air and for science.

The accounts of the years were begun in 1899. Ronald's occupies just one side of a sheet of foolscap and ends like a letter, 'Your loving Ronald' followed by—'P.S. It is to Mother to read'—another little indication of his natural timidity, which he could even then conquer when he felt that something was required of him; for to recite at the mid-term concert, as spoken of in his account, would need far more resolution than to read what he had written to the very friendly and appreciative circle at home.

Among the doings of school and holidays which stood out in his memory at the end of the year the only thing which need be mentioned is the November night when 'the shooting stars were supposed to come but they didn't'—a great disappointment to many as well as the writer.

No accounts were written in 1900, but they were resumed at the end of the following year when Ronald wrote a much fuller history. The slight impression made upon him by the Boer War as an event seems remarkable. There is no reference to its progress:—

'On the 18th February came the news of Mr. Church's death at the war. He was one of our masters. Some time before had come the news of Queen Victoria's death from anxiety. We had a whole holiday to see the Queen's funeral, and we had the luck to get a window in London. We also got a half a morning off for the Proclamation of the King in Oxford.'

The account ends: 'Teddie got the Brackenbury Scholarship for Science at Balliol for which we offer him our best congratulations: it is an extremely good ending to the year.'

The story of 1902 again shows a great increase in length, extending to nearly seven pages of foolscap. It begins with the Christmas visit to Youlbury and the games and acting there. Wedged into the account of the first term, after it had been written, were the words: 'About this time Peace was declared. There was a demonstration in

Oxford.' This and 'the carpentering shop and Museum otherwise known as the Church Memorial' at the O.P.S. are the only references to the Boer War.

There is an amusing description of his cousin Eustace Palmer's wedding at Easter. Ronald speaks of the building work in the garden at St. Helens being stopped—

'by the invitation to Eustace's wedding, in which Janet took part as Bridesmaid. The wedding was effected at St. Marie's Church. Janet though almost ill with fright still had enough in her to take the pretty bracelet which was given her as a present. After supper Aunt Jean very kindly sent us off to *Ulysses*. It was lovely, especially the scene representing Hades.'

Ronald's account of the journey from St. Helens to Oxford at the end of the summer holidays of 1902—referring only to Janet, Ronald himself, and the maids, for the others were away—reveals, I think, a power and sense of responsibility unusual in one so young:—

'After saying good-bye to all around here we started off. I walked by the sea-wall. We got into a very crowded train at Stokes Bay. At Fareham much to our surprise we were told we had to change. There was a frightful squash. We got into a first-class carriage much to the disgust of the guard. We again changed at Eastleigh, this time into a carriage where we hardly had standing room. At last we reached Basingstoke only to find that we had lost our train and must wait for an hour and a half. After a long time we got into an almost empty carriage with some ladies who greatly disliked our animals and who threatened to call the guard. Luckily the guard was not forthcoming. We again had to change at Reading, making five changes in all. We at last reached Oxford.'

During his Dragon period Ronald remained unusually nervous. His mother recalls that, in the early years, he found great difficulty, owing to his timidity, in getting 'changed' after games or bathing, and she well remembers the quakings at breakfast on the first morning of the school term after the holidays, the one breakfast at which Ronald would not eat marmalade! I think, however, that

this form of self-denial did not last very long. The same timidity appears in his account of 1901, when he said of a visit to Wokefield Park at Easter 'Uncle Alfred very kindly hired us two horses, but they were extremely fierce ones'.

My own memories are of the little disasters of childhood at St. Helens—fortunately few and far between, so that very little of his youth was clouded in this way. And sometimes there seemed to be a special justification for resentment against the fates. For instance, coming down from his bedroom with bare feet he once trod on a 'sleepy' wasp and was told that he had better put his shoes on next time. But when next time came he felt justly aggrieved that another 'sleepy' wasp had taken up its abode in one of the shoes! 'You told me to do it', he said reproachfully, and it was evident that the fact made the pain all the harder to bear.

Margaret too remembers, in the wonderful games and sports that used to go on, mainly under her leadership, how Ronald took his failures very much to heart. He was about ten at this time, and, although Janet was too young and Ted and Hilda too old to join, the 'Black Demon Band' was a formidable organization, including the cousins, children of Dr. and Mrs. Waller, and the family of our friend the late Prof. Gotch. St. Helens is an ideal place for such romantic adventures—sand pits for headquarters where the trial of rebels could be conducted in secret, deep dark thickets of gorse where it was possible to hide from foes who were always seeking to destroy the band, so that it was necessary to run from one cover to another very stealthily and quickly: it was safest indeed to traverse the dangerous open spaces in single file with the body bent at a right angle so that the height was reduced to but little more than half. And in order to be sure that the Black Demons were thoroughly fit it was necessary to subject them to certain tests which were carried out on a little single-plank bridge with a narrow hand-rail on one side. There was also the added fascination of danger at

any rate to clothes, for the bridge spanned a little stream, 'the heart of the river', and its banks of soft black mud, picturesquely called 'the porcupine piggishness'. The crowning feat was to walk along the narrow hand-rail. When Ronald fell he would exclaim 'Oh! I'm killed', not entirely in joke, and for quite a long time would lie motionless in the 'porcupine piggishness'.

At Oxford too Margaret and Ronald used to have great times in my workshop in the Dragon days, she doing her carving and he pretending to be an inefficient workman appropriately named Mr. Boosey.

It was in the year 1903, when he was about 13½, that Ronald's personality first attracted the attention and the surprise of his brother. Edward would no doubt have recognized it much earlier but for the six years' interval which prevented them from being at school together. I remember very well the incident described in the following memories:—

'I think the first occasion on which I noticed there was something different from myself in Ronald, at any rate in regard to our effect on other people, was on the occasion of our Easter visit to Paris, when there had been a row at the O.P.S. The difficulty was that the Skipper had been in the habit of asking various boys who were not in the cricket eleven, to go with the team and watch matches against other schools. This was looked on as a great treat by the boarders, as it meant a change from the regular routine. However, with many day-boys a Saturday afternoon at home was more enjoyable than watching any cricket match, and there was some grumbling.

'The Skipper was furious when he got to know about it, and thought Ronald was one of the chief grumblers, whereas, as far as I remember, Ronald did not mind very much either way, in fact he rather liked going. The Skipper one day told the school straight out what he thought of the grumblers, and in particular told Ronald what he thought of him. Ronald was much upset, and eventually Father wrote to Mr. Lynam and explained matters. When we were in Paris, Ronald received a most penitent letter from the Skipper, asking him to reply as soon as possible that he would forgive him for his suspi-

cions, and make things all right again. Ronald began his letter "Dear Skipper",¹ and in a most matter of fact way and quite unaffectedly said that things were all right. He received a second affectionate letter of thanks. I well remember the impression that these two letters made on me—that Ronald had succeeded in creating in another man a much deeper affection than I had ever done, and wondering what there was in this small boy that made this possible.'

From Mr. C. C. Lynam, the Headmaster of the O.P.S.

'I have been trying to put something down on paper about Ronnie, but I find it impossible. There is so much to say and yet one simply cannot say it. He was one of those boys in whose presence it was impossible to say or do anything nasty or offensive, and he seemed to raise and purify the atmosphere of school life. I really do not remember ever having had to find fault with him. His smile and his clear bright look always made me feel that one need never to ask, "Is life worth living?" There came a sort of breath of the Divine with him that dissipated care and weariness and renewed one's faith in God and Man.

I am ever your debtor, my friend, in that you gave me the privilege of intimately knowing and loving your dear boy.'

¹ He always spelled it that way when a Dragon. I remember that his first sentence—he showed me the letter—was to this effect: 'I was very glad to get your letter for I was rather anxious.' He then went on at once to our doings in Paris.—E. B. P.

IV

RUGBY: 1903-1908

My memory of Ronnie and our school life together is very vivid in my recollection. His death upset me more than anything which has so far happened in this war, and he still lives in my memory and that of many others of his pals as the finest fellow we have ever met.—Lt. C. C. WATSON, R.F.A., from the front, Jan. 24, 1917. Died of wounds June 1, 1917.

I can never forget the help he gave me and the influence which in his unobtrusive way he shed around him at Rugby and in the School House. I can but thank God that I have known him.—THE LATE HEADMASTER OF RUGBY.

THIS book was nearly finished when I read *The Loom of Youth*, in which the author claims that English Public Schools in general are fairly represented in the picture of 'Fernhurst'. The picture is certainly false of Rugby as Ronald knew it. Early in his time there was a boy at the School House who in his exclusive devotion to games and the style of his language was everything that the author of the *Loom* presents as typical. But it is quite clear from Ronald's correspondence with his older friend, H. F. Garrett, that this boy was not only exceptional but also unpopular. Garrett, who knew the boy when he was at the School House, wrote from Cambridge a tolerant letter advocating exceptional treatment for an exceptional class:—

'All these men want is work they can get up an interest for. Caesar and Xenophon never by any chance could appeal to them; and so, when they are at School, every bit of energy or interest they have is concentrated on games. It's not really their fault; they're made like that. The sooner they leave a public school, the better for themselves and the school, and I don't think a 'Varsity is the place for them either.' At the 'Varsity, he said, such a man 'is sure to find heaps of men who care for

games and games alone, and he will only get worse and worse. Whereas, if he goes into some business and gets to understand that there are other things than cricket and footer in life, he is sure to improve, provided he has got some of the right stuff in him.'

As regards immorality the picture in the *Loom* is even less true of Rugby. C. P. Evers writes:—

'Often when we met after school days we did not discuss serious matters to any extent—when the meetings were short there was no time for much more than ordinary exchange of views, and we were so glad to see each other that we spent a good deal of the time laughing.

'But we often did discuss things that mattered—much of it connected with school, the relations of masters and boys, the duties of the Vith, the curriculum, and so on. Above all, we discussed moral questions. The following letter shows how deeply he felt about this when he went to Oxford and started work at the Balliol Boys' Club. He felt strongly that boys ought to be warned of moral dangers at school. We had some correspondence about this. He was evidently so upset by his discoveries that I did my best to comfort him. But we agreed that it was a difficult subject to treat in the best and wisest way.'

Ronald's letter was written from Balliol on March 2, 1910:—

'What I want to ask you is, don't you think that grave harm is done in Public Schools

'(1) By not explaining quite plainly all about it—merely from the material point of view of the boy—to the boy when he gets to a suitable age,

'(2) by not being much plainer about it, and by cloaking it under such vague terms as are used in the pulpit and elsewhere?

'I am quite sure that the principle of keeping that kind of thing dark must be wrong, when I say that I went right through Rugby with only the vaguest ideas of what was meant by immorality. Although I admit that certain words from my Mother kept me straight *before* I went to Rugby. What I mean is that had I gone wrong at Rugby, though it would have been largely my fault, yet to a large extent it would have been through ignorance of the harm I was doing myself. Because our house, like all the houses at

Rugby, I hope, never opened any boy's eyes by any filthy action.

'Excuse my talking, my dear Claude, on this sordid subject. But after all in the slums of Oxford or elsewhere, *it is the only matter of desperate importance*. What I ask you can you think of this system of concealment of knowledge, when one of *our officers* expressed *surprise* because we were horrified when he casually told us that he made a beast of himself?

'In a club of some forty or fifty boys I suppose we know of some ten or twelve boys who have contracted the most filthy habits. And there are probably many more.

'I am convinced that all that which is preached in the pulpit about filling up your time, and never being idle, *is simply a gospel of cowardice*. It teaches you not to face the temptation, but somehow or other to get round it. What I say is make the boy realize the wrong he does himself, so that having realized it, he may be strong enough to be able to be idle without harm.

'After all as Rae¹ said, it is such a common thing, that why should it be talked of in bated breath, and never explained?'

After speaking again of his ignorance of such things at Rugby he continues:—

'How can you expect an ignorant boy to ask about things, about which there is such a mystery? Certain people at School used to say how pi I was, and how ignorant of things. And I ask you how can a member of the VIth do his duty in this business if he doesn't know what to look out for?

'I can quite understand the danger of making the whole thing too open and obvious. But I would not let any boy know anything about it till he comes to the age when the temptation may assail him.'

In the concluding words of an article on the school in *Country Life* for April 8, 1916, Alfred Ollivant sums up his impressions of Rugby as he knew it and speaks of the time that was coming—the time of which some features are, I hope, preserved in the following sections:—

¹ Ronald's Balliol friend Keith Rae, often spoken of in later pages.

'Dr. Percival killed the heavy swell. Since his days the 'buck', as I believe the modern Rugbeian calls him, is a boy among boys, and not a god among mortals. And in the last twenty years the school athletes have excelled as never before: Victor Cartwright, the two Stoops, Ronald Poulton, Kenneth Powell, E. W. Dillon, all learned their craft in the Close. Certainly the times have changed. That lingering note of savagery which characterized the upper classes, and therefore the Public Schools, through the nineteenth century has died away. And it is hard for us to conceive that there may be Rugbeians still alive who remember when it was the custom for the fag to warm his master's bed of bitter winter nights by lying in it before the entry of his lord. In my time there was no bullying at Rugby, but on the other hand there were no Ronald Poultons, Rupert Brookes, and Kenneth Powells. These men stand for something new in the history of the school. They represent the spirit of the twentieth century, a graciousness, a tolerance, a human sympathy, unknown to us of the older generation.

'And these three great ones I have named, if they were the chief, were also but the children of their time. All three, with hundreds more who were used with them to answer Calling Over in Old Big School, have fallen victims to that eruption of animalism which is the anti-thesis of everything for which their large and generous natures stood. They and their fellows have fought the good fight and finished their course, almost before the echo of their schoolboy feet has died in Quad and Cloister; but they are surely with us still—

Marching at dusk across the Close in column,
Mud-stained and triumphant from the trenches where they
bled,
Endless Battalions, in the listening twilight,
Swinging home at evening, the Army of our Dead.'

In writing the account of Ronald's schooldays I have received much kind help from his friends among the masters and boys, and have also consulted the pages of the *Meteor*, especially for his athletic performance. But I have chiefly relied on Ronald's own words in his letters and accounts of the years. These will show that his school life was not a thing apart but woven into one with

his family life. Quoted passages without any indication of origin are always from Ronald's accounts of the years.

To Hilda.

'Oct. 4.

'I am getting on very well here thank you. I find it much nicer than I expected it to be. The Sixth in our dorm. is very young and rather strict, but he is very nice.

'Last Wednesday Bowring (Head of games) took me into his study and told me all about what Mr. Lynam wrote to him. He asked me who taught me footer, so I said Vassall. He said "G. C. Vassall of Oxford. Oh, you must be well taught". This shows how famous Vassall is.

'It is very touchant ("très touchant" to copy what you said) to find I am at all missed by my elder sister.

'*I am an Alto* in the choir. I sing most superiorly now, and please tell Mother that I will sing alto with her in church when I come home.'

To Margaret at school in Paris.

'Oct. 25.

'As I have not really written a decent letter this term I must do so now. Thank you so much for your letter, it was kind of you to write. I am sorry I have not written before, but Sunday is the only day I can write.

'I am working very hard here to get out of my form (Upper Middle II) next term, though I think this very doubtful.

'Mr. Lynam wrote as you know to the head of the games to tell him of our respective merits. In consequence I play invariably now in "Belows"¹, the top *House Game*.

¹ In order to understand this and other football terms in use at Rugby it is necessary to explain the system followed at the school. My son Dr. E. P. Poulton has drawn up the following account:—

"Big-side" is an arranged game of football, on the Big-side ground opposite the Tablet commemorating the origin of Rugby Football, between the best two Fifteens in the school chosen entirely by merit from any House. It takes place nearly every half-holiday, except when there are foreign matches or House matches. During my last years there were always two Big-sides, absorbing 60 players between them. While Big-side is being played the first Fifteens of all the Houses, without the best players who are in Big-sides, play against

I have not yet played in a House Match and I know I shan't do so this year, but I played in "Counting Belows" which is really a House Match without the five or six best chaps.

'No end of chaps get "dished" (hurt) in footer. In one game we played one man went off to the "San." with a sprained ankle, while four or five others stopped the game at different times for about three minutes each. At present in our house we have three members of the House Fifteen in the San. besides one who has just come out. But you needn't be afraid of me getting hurt, as it is usually the forwards who get hurt and not the $\frac{3}{4}$ s.

'Half term in two weeks hurrah! Then I shall see *Mother!!!!*

That letter of yours was quite worth the money I can assure you. I am becoming quite a letter-writer now. I write about five to seven letters on Sunday, only five to-day. You are coming home for Christmas I hope: as I am looking forward to seeing you then. It will disappoint me if you don't.

'Chapel bell just going for Evening Service. Please write soon.'

To Hilda.

'Nov. 24.

"Mes felicitations" on your hockey career. How did you play against the High School? I suppose you won? (Don't show Janet this or she might get angry at me taking it for certain that you won)—(also please ask her which [school] was founded first her's or Lynam's, and which one copied its colours from the other.) We have had a row here in the school generally, but as it is not important to any one except those who participated in it, and I wasn't one of those, it can wait till the holidays to be told. The only inconvenience is that in consequence all halves on Monday have been stopped—which is rather a blow.

each other. These are called "Belows". The second and third fifteens similarly play against each other and are called "II Belows" and "III Belows" respectively. On certain days these Below matches are arranged on a league, viz. as in an American tournament, and are called "Counting Belows", "Counting II Belows", and "Counting III Belows", so called because the victories count towards the order of merit determined at the end of term.'

'The Chemistry we do here is awful fun and if only I had the apparatus in the holidays I could make heaps of things. You are not doing Chemistry in the Museum are you? I wish you were because you and I could go there together in the holidays to look around.

'Last Wednesday we had a lecture on the Revolution. It was a *very good lecture* [by Hilaire Belloc], but not very interesting to some boys. I must say I rather liked it; he compared with our-time politics rather well and had some amusing anecdotes to illustrate his words. Last Sunday we had a lecture on the Mission in India. He showed some very good slides. He also showed us two *Lepers*. It certainly was a most disgusting sight: he apologized for showing us them. It was a very interesting lecture.'

Lt. C. C. Watson, R. F. A., wrote from the front Feb. 21, 1917:—

'My first memory of Ronnie is curiously enough, in view of our later friendship, of the first day he was at Rugby School. He passed well in the School into "Upper Middle II"—Mr. Hawkesworth's form at that time—and I can still see him distinctly sitting as bottom boy of the class by the door, with his Eton collar and rather long front hair generally a little low over his right eye, and his knees stuck out at an angle of ninety degrees. I remember him as rather a quiet shy boy at that time and as I had been in the School a year then we had nothing in common and I did not get to know him. Funnily enough that was the only time I was in the same form as Ronnie, as his progress was much more rapid than mine; besides which his specialization took him into a different sphere.'

The first mention of Ronald's football in the *Meteor* (Dec. 22, 1903, p. 150) is in the description of School House *v.* Collins' in 'Final Counting Belows'. In this game, won by the School House, 39 points to 1 try, he 'played very well at three-quarters'.

In the holidays he went with me for the first time to the much-loved Magdalen Carols on Christmas Eve (p. 123). Then there were happy days as of old at Youlbury and at Marlston, where at the fancy dress ball 'I passed with some success as a baby. I must give thanks to Margaret for her kind help in getting me up'.

On his return to Rugby Ronald entered Form Upper Middle I, from which he secured his remove at the end of the term. He wrote to his mother on Feb. 7:—

‘I am third this week in my form which is one better, and I really think that I have quite a good chance of getting out at the end of the term, then Hurrah!!! no more fagging.’

On Jan. 25 there was a school levée on playing Hockey at Easter, and Ronald thought it a great pity that the game was not given a trial, for he disliked the School Runs and thought that most of the boys disliked them too.

‘Later on in the term the Confirmation ceremony was performed. As I was chosen one of the select choir I had an interesting part in the ceremony.’ Then came practising for the Sports on March 23–24 in which ‘I won some races and so got afterwards a silver bowl. . . . Teddie came down for the Sports and carried off the prize for the Old Boys’ Race with great éclat.’ Edward gave a little account of these sports in a letter to his mother:—

‘As you might imagine, Ronald did simply splendidly and I am certain created a record for the number of prizes he won in events under 16 years and $14\frac{1}{2}$. He won every event he went in for under $14\frac{1}{2}$.

‘His total number of prizes was 8 and I helped to bring them back to his study after the races.

‘It was impossible not to be impressed with his great athletic power, and he shows promise of being quite Rugby’s best athlete when he gets older. Of course you know how entirely he is free from conceit of any kind. You can imagine that I had one of the nicest days of my life in watching him.’

The following account of his performance appears in the *Meteor* (Apr. 16, 1904, p. 34):—

‘In the under events Poulton stood out pre-eminent. He won the 100 yds. both under $14\frac{1}{2}$ and under 16, the 150 yds. under 16, the 300 under $14\frac{1}{2}$, the Broad Jump under 16, the Half-Mile under $14\frac{1}{2}$, was second in the High Jump and Steeplechases under 16, and third in the Hurdles under 16, a wonderful all-round performance.

His times in the 300 yds. and half-mile under $14\frac{1}{2}$ were excellent, and his winning two 100 yd. races one after the other in 12 secs. was a very fine performance.'

Lt. C. C. Watson wrote:—

'I remember towards the end of that winter term [1903] that I heard his name mentioned several times as a very promising football player, but the first time he became really known was when he swept the board at the Junior Sports in 1904. I took a special interest in the performance, having done the same the year before, and I remember being told by Kenneth Powell that I should have to look to my laurels, which proved truer than I ever dreamed of at the time.'

At these, his last athletic sports at Rugby, Kenneth Powell won the Athletic Cup, with a total of $6\frac{1}{4}$, while his and C. C. Watson's House, W. G. Michell's, won the Wrigley Cup with 195, although the School House was close upon them with 192.

An amusing incident relating to these sports is described by Ronald in a letter to Margaret—a very unusual letter, inasmuch as the circumstances led him to speak in detail of his own performance.

'I have just been out to dinner with Mrs. Eden who seems to know a good deal more about Father than I do. She kept on asking me if Father had such and such a plant, and I didn't for the life of me know.

'It was funny; an assistant master there was talking about the sports, and he said that one of his (Eden's) boys had run the half-mile in 2 min. 30 sec. He said he thought that it was a much better time than the time of the under $14\frac{1}{2}$ half-mile at Rugby School, which he said was not at all a good time and that it was over 2 min. 30 sec. The funny thing is that I, who won that race, was in the room all the time; and as a matter of fact I did it in 2 min. $26\frac{3}{4}$ sec., which was better than the last two years times and the time of the under 16. Rather a *faux pas* wasn't it? I blushed most mightily.'

Ronald found this vacation in 1904 'to be of greater interest than many other Easter holidays, in that it was the

first time that the family with the exception of father found and took up with Palaeolithic flint implements'.

Rugby in the Summer Term seemed to Ronald 'an outline of doings fogged and dimmed by a mass of ice-cream. It is an extraordinary thing, but practically not a day passed in which I did not regale myself with at least one ice-cream'.

He was placed in Mr. Payne-Smith's form V 2 b, and was extremely happy and interested in the work, although disappointed in failing to get his remove. In cricket he

'missed the House Eleven by one place. The evenings were usually spent in going on "ends", that is playing cricket in a net. As I had got my Young Guard, which is a collection of boys under sixteen, I had an advantage in that I could go when I wished to nets which had a special professional to coach.'

On the breaking-up day he went to London with his friends the Garretts to stay with them and see the match at Lords, which was 'very depressing just as it was all through, as we were so completely out-played'. One evening 'we played bridge, but as they completely out-played me, the game to me was a continual attempt to keep down the number of my mistakes. Needless to say I failed entirely'.

Among 'facts which must be mentioned:—on June 11 Sir Alfred Jones in fulfilment of his promise sent to Janet a grey parrot. It is now quite a pet of the family'. The bird, which speaks Ronald's name beautifully, was always a great favourite of his, and is associated with him in many memories, especially at St. Helens, where 'Pepper' would always be near us when we worked in the garden and would be wheeled down to the beach on the barrow when the tent was to be put up. On one occasion he was frightened by a movement of part of the framework on which he was sitting, and flew straight into the sea. Ronald waded in to the rescue and found him floating very high in the water and showing his alarm, not by loud and piercing sounds, but by great rapidity of utterance. I also remember

Ronald, as he was sitting reading in the train on the way to St. Helens, putting his finger through the bars of the little travelling cage so that Pepper might be amused by caressing it.

Janet was the great source of information about Pepper and all the other animals. Thus, in 1905, Ronald was told that

‘Pepper is very well ; he says “ Ronald ” ; he tries to say “ Ronald you rascle ”. “ Prince ” [Hilda’s dog] is ill ; he has bronchitis (I’ve no idea how to spell it).

‘One of the baby pigeons died ; he was quite tame and couldn’t fly, and would not eat. I buried him in my Cemetery, and put a slate up for a grave stone, and wrote on it in red chalk :—

In loving Memory of
BABS
only child of Clowie.’

Margaret too was always full of information about the animals and once taxed his ingenuity with this statement : ‘We have at present in the house thirty-eight living or beating hearts, counting humans, if you understand these statistics.’

In the summer holidays, when the family was reunited, an event happened by which Ronald was a good deal upset. One special charm of St. Helens was its unconventionality. All the members of the family could do as they liked and dress as they liked. But in the summer of 1904 a house in the village was taken by a pleasant friendly family with different ideas. ‘They were very fashionable but nice. Their chief amusement seemed to be dancing.’ Now dancing at St. Helens seemed to Ronald the beginning of the end of the old simplicity, and when an invitation arrived he

‘was rather perturbed. It necessitated a journey to Ventnor to get some articles of apparel. At length I was persuaded and Margaret and I accepted. My view may be summed up in a few words. I knew no ladies, I could not then dance the waltz. The dance which finished at 1.0 lengthened into a supper which lasted till 2.0. As I had two suppers already with Margaret, I refused this one.

Margaret accepted it. In consequence I sat down on a chair absolutely alone and surrounded by waitresses.'

Ronald's account of the summer at St. Helens starts with :—

'One other topic of importance. That, of course, is our find of Palaeoliths. We came expecting to find, and strange to say we did find them. We went often several times a week, and though on many occasions we were not rewarded yet I should think we brought back trophies on almost a dozen occasions. Mr. Baker¹ came down to visit us. He was rather shaky in his belief with regard to them. But one lucky day we set out and he found one. This quite converted him. The rage grew on us in proportion as we succeeded, even leading us to get up at 6.0 a.m. the day before we left.'

His account of the holidays ends: 'the night before I went to Rugby we went to the "Lights o' London" a somewhat melodramatic but all the same pathetic play. I enjoyed it very much.'

At Rugby he was still in V 2 b, under Mr. Payne-Smith, who had been—so Ronald found to his great surprise—for two years head of Wycliffe Hall, next door to his Oxford home. 'He is an awfully nice man. The more I saw of him the more I liked him.'

Ronald's place in the choir became rather uncertain in this Advent Term, but he succeeded in keeping it, as he wrote to his brother on Oct. 2, 'by a judicious oiling of the voice. As a matter of fact I can sing alto quite well, but I shan't be able to last on next term I'm afraid'.

The following letter, written to his mother on Dec. 18, is fixed into his scrap-book, probably because of the early reference to his dear friend William Temple :—

'I have really had a most successful term's work and play. Besides my form Prize, last Wednesday I was approached by the Captain of Football and awarded my Flannels (known as 'Bags') a Distinction¹ next below

¹ Prof. H. B. Baker, F.R.S.

² The 'Distinctions' at Rugby are given in Advent Term for success

a *Cap*. I know it's a thing I oughtn't to be overjoyed at, but I'm quite pleased. But I think there is too much fuss made over it. For I am now in *Hall*,¹ that is a thing which people of 7 terms are entitled to, and I can wear 'Barmaid' collars, &c.

'Well, I am looking forward to see you all on Wednesday, I can tell you.

'Yesterday we had a game—School House *v.* School House Old Rugbeians. The O. R.'s won. There were a lot whom I knew, the dear W. Temple and H. F. Garrett, &c. Bye-the-bye H. H. Hardy² is here taking a form whose master is away. I talked to him in the interval of the Concert last night: he is awfully nice. The Concert was quite a success and very novel—a very good treble solo and 4 Piano solos with strings. To-morrow there is a short school Concert, in which there is going to be a piece of 4 Pianos with *two* at each. I rather doubt whether it will be a success.'

Ronald's account of 1904 continues:—

'The night before breaking up an old custom was observed, which is observed at the end of every term.

in Football. They are (1) 'Flannels', commonly known as 'Bags'—the right to wear black stockings: there are about 30 of these in the school at any one time. (2) 'Caps', wearing white knickers, special jerseys, and a gorgeous gold and silver braided tasselled velvet cap: there are about 30 of these. (3) The XV, with a special band on the straw hat, blue knickers, and crest on the white jersey.

The value attached to 'Distinctions' may be inferred from a paragraph in his brother's account of 1904: 'It was a great pleasure to find that Ronald had got his "Bags", a Distinction which I just missed getting all the time I was there. He is on the way to being a regular blood, one of the right kind, combining powers of work with athletic proficiency.'

¹ William Temple kindly informs me that 'Getting into Hall' at the School House means the privilege of sitting at the middle table for meals and of coming into the Hall and reading the papers after Prep. in the evening, or between Lock-up and Prep. The only fire in the House is there, so the privilege is worth something. The right of using the Hall at other times, and of walking through or standing under Hall Arch is confined to Sixths, Caps, Elevens, and the Head of Hall, viz. the Senior boy, provided he holds a distinction of some kind such as the Racquet Pair.

² Capt. Rifle Brigade; now Headmaster of Cheltenham.

I refer to the custom of 'knuckling down'. All the fags are leaped over as in leap-frog (down a narrow passage into which the dormitories lead) by the Distinctions. I had to leap. I think it is a silly custom, as I got my toes hurt against the sides of the passage several times.'

In the Lent Term of 1905 Ronald was confirmed by Bishop Mylne, whose impressive address I remember very well. A little earlier in the term his friend H. F. Garrett wrote to him from Cambridge:—

'Just a short letter—*really* a short one this time—to give you all good wishes for your confirmation and all it may bring. I hope it will always be a comfort to you and a source of strength in times of sorrow and temptation: I am certain it can well be all this, and often is so.'

As regards work he 'entered Mr. Collins' form V a'.

The following undated letter to Hilda is shown by the reference to hockey to belong to this term. The absence of his sister's letter is to be regretted, considering the nature of its effects.

'A sad fatality must be recorded:—

'FROM THE BIDEE!¹ NEWS.
'SAD DISAPPEARANCE OF A
'RUGBY SCHOOL
'STUDENT

'12.0 a.m.

'It appears that on Monday last during breakfast in the School House Rugby Hall, a student, whose name has been ascertained to be R. W. Poulton, was seen suddenly and with increasing celerity to be slipping below the table. All efforts to save him were found impossible. He was picked up almost unconscious. No further details.

'(Through Reuter's Agency).'

At the bottom of the front page, entirely occupied by the above notice, was a reference to the last page giving later news:—

'12.10.

'All fears can be dispelled. The youth has recovered and gives details. He says that he received that morning

¹ A family word meaning mock sympathy.

a letter from his sister E. H. P. which was so amusing and so terribly funny and witty, that he laughed so hard that he found himself slowly losing consciousness and sinking below the table. Measures are being taken by school authorities to open and destroy any too amusing letters as being too funny for youths' precarious nerves.

'(Reuter).'

'Isn't it lovely about Hockey with regard to you and Teddie? I hear Teddie scored the goals against *London* and you, you are playing vigorously. Bye the bye they haven't elected you to play for the English Ladies' team yet, have they? Please marconigraph when they do.'

The last paragraph referred to the selection of his brother and eldest sister for the Oxford *v.* Cambridge teams. A little later he wrote to his brother on his share in the Oxford victory (3 goals to 1):—

'Hearty congratulations on your brilliant victory. You don't know how I swelled with pride when I read your magnificent doings in the papers. They praised you like anything. I should have loved to have been there to watch. The papers said that your "fast passes and dashing play won the game", or something similar. It really was glorious, especially so, since the betting was for Cambridge and against Oxford.'

His sister's match was less successful, for although the score was the same, 3-1, it was unfortunately the other way.

Ronald wrote of the Sports in his account of 1905: 'our House succeeded in winning the Wrigley Cup. I won an event or two and bought a silver salver with the proceeds.'

The *Meteor* (April 4, 1905, p. 38) says of him: 'In the junior events Poulton and C. C. Watson were, as last year, unrivalled, besides being conspicuous in the opens as well.' Ronald's performance in this and other years at Rugby is tabulated on p. 105.

Ronald was, with two others, fifth for the Athletic Cup, gained by M. B. U. Dewar. The cup is awarded for the highest marks gained in open events, each first counting 1 and each second $\frac{1}{2}$ mark.

The School House gained the Wrigley Cup with 256 marks, the next house, Donkin's, gaining 97.

Ronald played in the School XV in all five Rugby matches of the term. In the first *v.* Cambridge O. R.'s, he had Kenneth Powell as an antagonist. At Easter—

'The search for implements went on, with varying luck. Our enthusiasm was tremendous and compelled us to get up before breakfast to prosecute our search.

'The summer term as usual went off *absolutely* uneventfully with cricket, work in Mr. Collins' form, bathing, and bicycle rides with Mr. Payne-Smith. A bright and happy spot in the term was the visit to Rugby by Mother, Hilda, and Margaret—a farewell visit before their African tour.'

On this subject he wrote to Margaret on July 16:—

'I must say I wish you weren't going, but it's a selfish wish and I retract it. But it will be a very different holiday to most, as we make so much of being all together.'

A little later, after we had started, he wrote to Janet, the only sister left in England, on July 23:—

'I suppose you are the Mother I must write to now (only I hope in that case that you will write to me as many times as Mother does). Isn't it sad now they have all gone?'

Towards the end of term Ronald received a letter from the Skipper, referring to the three Old Dragons in the School House—W. T. Collier, Claude Hardy, and Ronald himself:—

'I want to tell you what a reputation you three in the School House have to live up to. Dr. James wrote to me the other day: "Your School House trio are *excellent* fellows, good workers, manly, and altogether an excellent element in it, so I am keen to get more." Give my love to the other two and mind you all three live up to your present character! It is a long time since anything has pleased me so much. Scholarships are *nothing* to it.'

On July 11 Ronald wrote to his brother at Balliol, who had been unfortunate in his class in the Final School of Natural Science (Chemistry):—

'You really don't know how much I sympathize with

you, in not obtaining a first. Any one with a bit of an eye can see that you are well worth it; it is a pity. But after all, I don't see that it makes so much difference except with regard to Fellowships. But I am sure they won't take much regard to your place when they know you. I shall be awfully interested to hear about it when I see you. But I can easily see from what Father said you did not anything like do yourself justice. I think exams. are such very bad tests of a man's ability, because it is only a certain kind of examn. brain which can contract into three hours all the amount of knowledge required. Here I fail always.'

At the beginning of the summer holidays Ronald again stayed with his friends the Garretts to see the match. He then met his brother at Charing Cross and went with him to New Romney for his first visit to the Rugby Mission Camp. Thus, before he was sixteen, was born in Ronald that enthusiasm which grew stronger and stronger with each year of his life, becoming in the end the most powerful of all the influences by which he was swayed.

Later on in the holidays Ronald went to Carlisle 'to meet Mr. Collins by whom I had been invited to visit the Roman Wall stretching from Newcastle to Carlisle. We stayed the night at Carlisle, and the next day trained to Naworth, where we saw a splendid old abbey. We drove along the wall, seeing some fine bits of Roman architecture, till we reached Hexham. We saw Hexham Abbey, a fine old building in the centre of the town, and early the next morning drove to Chollerford for breakfast. This village is on the river Tyne and is close to the bridge which the Romans built over the river, the piers of which can be seen still quite clearly in the water. We inspected this and then drove along the wall till it turned away from the road to scale some cliffs to the north. . . . We lunched in the Roman fort of Borcovicus on the wall and walked back along the wall on the top of some fine rugged cliffs, from which we could see the Northumberland lakes very well. We arrived back at Chollerford in the evening and the next morning inspected a fine encampment near the bridge.'

At school in the Advent Term: 'As I was head of games in the house, I had a great many new duties to perform. I was made a sixth power much to my pleasure and finally

joined the specialists and definitely started my extra work in Physics and Chemistry. The work was of course quite new and strange and the physics especially very difficult. But by degrees it got easier and soon I began to see what I was aiming at.'

In a letter to his mother, he spoke of the sixth power and of his feeling of responsibility :—

'The House has only seven Viths and so two more have been made to look after the eighty boys in the house, and I'm one. I am ever so glad. And Dr. James was very complimentary when he gave it me. He made me quite blush! I am head of games in the house, so that makes the reason of me being chosen as one.'

During this term Ronald was given his 'Cap' and his 'Colours' as one of the XV. His 'character' is thus described in the *Meteor* (xxxix, p. 163) :—

'R. W. Poulton, '05 (10 st. 3 lb.): A centre three-quarter of great promise. Very fast, and has a useful swerve. Plays a most unselfish game. His defence is not as strong as it might be.'

His friend H. F. Garrett wrote from Cambridge :—

'Well, very heartiest congratulations, Ronnie, on the XV: not that of course it was ever for a moment in doubt that you would get it this year; but I know what a happy moment it is—one of the happiest in a man's whole life, I should think—when he gets that blissful little note.'

From Ronald to his brother :—

'I think athletics are made too much of here, though—thank you for your congratulations—I am certainly glad to have got it. We had a lively argument in "Hall" last night, which resolved itself into the importance of games and work. I argued with vehemence against a man who does little or no work, is keen on games, and reads the *Sportsman*. It seems to me that if one works with the same vigour as one plays games one can't go far wrong.'

In the same letter he took occasion to say another cheering word about the disappointment in the summer class-list.

Referring to a recent examination for a Magdalen Fellowship he said: 'I am so glad you beat all the I Class men, as it shows your superior worth to everybody who couldn't see it for himself.'

'The year [1906] started by a performance of *Our Boys* by the Poulton family at Wykeham House, before an audience first of girl and boy friends and then before their parents. The play was a great success and the staging showed how wonderfully well a home-made stage and home-made appliances succeed.' Ronald took the part of Talbot Champneys, while his brother was Charles Middlewick.

Early in the term he wrote to Hilda, comparing their work:—

'How goes the Physics? I hope well. I at present am just finishing Heat and am to start on Higher Dynamics. But I have got to do Optics and Sound and Light and lots more yet. But in the holidays what fun we shall have trying to beat each other in questions.'

The earlier pages of this book have shown that Ronald was intended by nature to be an engineer; and when in course of time the question of his University career came to be considered, we were faced by the difficulty that Cambridge had a flourishing school in this subject while Oxford had only made a tentative experiment, just drawing to its close, in the same direction. From the educational point of view it looked as though Ronald ought to go to Cambridge. His own feelings were expressed in a letter written early in the term to his mother: 'The more I think of going to Cambridge the more abhorrent it is to me. I only hope there will be some way out of it.' Fortunately for his wishes a way was found, and just in time, so that Ronald became one of the first pupils of the first Oxford professor, who came into residence the very same term as Ronald and succeeded in persuading the University to establish an Honour School of Engineering. The incident is of some interest, showing, as it does, the

injury to British education that is threatened by those who contend that each of the two ancient Universities should leave to the other the representation of certain important subjects. Many men go and always will go to Oxford or Cambridge for reasons other than the educational equipment. Therefore every important subject must be represented adequately—not necessarily equally—in both Universities.

In the course of this term, when he was about 16 $\frac{1}{2}$, Ronald had his first experience of speaking in public. Referring to the starting of a Debating Society in the School House, he wrote to his mother on Feb. 25: 'I am sure speaking informally like this makes one much more a master of oneself when one has to make an impromptu speech.' A few days later he wrote: 'We had a debate last night on the question, "Is sport cruel?" I spoke for it being cruel. It was very amusing altogether, but we were badly beaten. I felt quite at home on my legs, speaking.'

Earlier pages show Ronald's great keenness and interest in the flint implements found near St. Helens. In the course of this term I wrote to him suggesting that he should begin to prepare a paper on the whole collection, comparing it with those made in other parts of England. He replied:—

'Your letter filled me with pride, though I felt it slightly undeserved; for after all I have done very little at present with regard to implements; but I really feel very keen and shall just love to start this paper under your directions.'

The same day he wrote to his mother: 'The more I think of them, the keener I am to get to St. Helens to start on my paper about them.' The work, thus begun, was continued from time to time for many years, giving him a great deal of pleasure and leading to developments which will appear later on.

Lord Roberts visited the School early in the term

(*Meteor*, xl, pp. 1-2, 31-5), and Ronald wrote Feb. 18 to his mother :—

‘ Lord Roberts came down last Friday and examined the Corps, and we had ample opportunity of examining him as he several times stood just opposite us while we were looking on. He really is rather nice-looking, and extraordinarily upright and agile for 72, as I believe he is. Afterwards he gave us an outline of his policy in Big School. It was quite sweet to see the way he took off his top hat when the band played the Grand Salute. Altogether it was quite an interesting occasion.’

Although at this phase of his life Ronald had no interest in military affairs, he was evidently impressed by Lord Roberts’s visit, for he wrote of it to Edward as well as to his mother.

The *Meteor* (xl, p. 41), referring to the Sports towards the end of term, mentions as ‘ Among the most notable features: Poulton’s Broad Jump (19 ft. 6 in.), Stoop’s and Poulton’s High Jump (5 ft. 1½ in.)’ The details of his performance are given on pages 45-8 with the following summary: ‘ In the open events, Poulton was the hero of the day, winning the Broad Jump, the 150 Yards, the Quarter Mile, and the Hurdle Race, and being second in the Hundred Yards and High Jump.’ Ronald won the Athletic Cup with five marks against three gained by the second. He also won the Racquet Handicap (*Meteor*, xl, p. 41).

He wrote on March 30 to his mother and father congratulating us on our silver wedding, to be celebrated on the following day.

To his Mother.

“ Congratsers ”, as they say here, on your Silver Wedding, and many happy returns of the day.

‘ Time seems to go faster and faster, and I remember quite well, several years ago, reckoning up what year your Silver Wedding would come in. And now it has come. I only hope it will be a very happy one.

‘ With best love, darling, and many happy returns.’

To his Father.

'Well, Father dear, first let me congratulate you from my heart on your Silver Wedding.

'It was simply lovely to see you again yesterday, and, as Mr. Collins said, you looked young enough to be my brother. What a lovely time we do have together in the I.O.W. and at Oxford, don't we? I am sure this holidays will be no exception.

'I always feel so terribly sorry for the boys whom I know, who have lost their parents, when I think what you and mother are to me.

'I hope you will have a nice time in London and thoroughly enjoy yourself. Please give me your impression of *Nero*, as a boy in our house is always talking about the goodness and beauty of it.

'On Tuesday next I am going with Hugh-Jones to the Lime Kilns, where they have found implements and *Elephas antiquus* bones. I don't know whether we shall find anything, as it all depends on whether a fresh face of gravel has been cleared or not. Anyhow it will be very great fun. When we get to the Isle of Wight we really must investigate the Foreland locality, which Evans mentions. We might quite possibly find another locality.

'I shall have to seriously start learning Geology now that this paper is going to be written and that I may definitely take it up.'

Towards the end of the Easter holidays Ronald developed mumps, and, as he wrote:—

'Began on my paper on the palaeolithic locality in Priory Bay, in fact of the whole Island.

'The work seemed easier, and I found I had quite got the drift of the work, and I think I learnt quite a large amount. The cricket was not particularly interesting, and the scorer I am sure found it monotonous continually putting down the same score against me. As a matter of fact, for some unknown reason I was given my tie, a distinction which I certainly did not earn.'

To Hilda.

'I may as well say straight away, that I only wish the inventor of cricket had never been born. For some inexplicable reason they thought fit to give me my "tie"—

the lowest distinction—but as my last scores have been 0, 4, 30, you can see how little I am worth it. I got it on the strength of an 8r I made.'

Towards the end of term he wrote to his brother:—

'I simply *must* do some work in the holidays, and I want you to do your best to force me to do so.'

'... Term ended, and I waited on an hour or two to meet Father, Mother, Hilda, and Teddie at Rugby Station all bound for the York British Association. It was my first British Association, and a very interesting experience. I went to several Sections and heard papers on Radium, osmotic pressure, &c., and unfortunately just missed an account of an implement locality at Ipswich. Hilda and I varied our labours by delicious ices at a restaurant near by. The second lecture Father and I cut and went to the *Silver King* at the theatre as a pleasant diversion. We went a fine expedition to Rivaulx Abbey all across the moors, and had a splendid view of the Abbey from a magnificent grass terrace almost overhanging it.'

Ronald was not yet reconciled to dancing. A letter to Hilda shows clearly enough that he was still gripped by the memories of St. Helens two summers before:—

'Margaret and I will have a lovely time at Marlston, I expect, barring the dance which is looming ahead. So next Saturday or Friday, whichever it is, please think of a poor chap, with a dinner jacket covering his brawny shoulders, trying to dance one of the hundreds of walses with some unknown lady partner. Ough!!! (how do you spell it?)'

But Margaret was quite equal to the occasion, of which she wrote:—

'I had to brace Ronald up, coax and cuddle him before I could persuade him to attend such a mighty function.'

And in the end all was well, for he was able to write to his brother:—

'I really quite enjoyed myself. The dance went off better than I could expect.'

Soon after the dance he went back to Rugby, and his account continues:—

‘I found I had been placed in the VIth and got through a good deal of work in the term. In the football I played in all the matches, and as Watson, the Captain, got crocked in a game quite early in the term and was unable to play again, I had to Captain the team in most of the matches.

‘On the whole term I came out top of the Science Specialists, which pleased me rather. House supper went off successfully, and so the term ended.’

His mother wrote to him on Oct. 6:—

‘Let me first congratulate you warmly on being in the VIth. I am sure you will help to make the VIth a strong and high-toned body, and you know as well as I do, that Prayer to God is the real means which will give you the power to do this. I can quite imagine how you will enjoy the increased responsibility.’

The following memories of Ronald were written in a central African jungle by one of his fags, who wishes me to observe the Service tradition and withhold his name:—

‘When at Rugby it was my good fortune to be his “fag”, an honour of which I was, and always have been, very proud. What chiefly impressed one was his cheery manner and total absence of “side”. To his “fags” he was invariably kind, considerate, and never patronizing; he took the trouble to show interest in the small boys who cleaned his study in the morning and made his toast in the evening, helped us when in difficulties and was a genuine friend to us. I have never known any one to take advantage of his kindness to be familiar or impertinent, but there was something in his manner towards us “fags” which made us do our small duties for him to the best of our ability, because one regarded him more as a friend for whom one would gladly do anything than as a “fagmaster” whose orders had to be obeyed. So far as I know, he was the only “buck” (to use a school term) who, realizing that the future of the house games lay in teaching the small boys, used to take the trouble to come down to our games in his spare time to instruct us in the art of playing football. A word of praise from

him on these occasions was more valued by us than the highest commendation from anybody else.'

Letters from his friend H. F. Garrett show that Ronald, in thus helping the small boys with their games, was the inheritor of a fine tradition. Harry Garrett, one of four brothers, all at the School House, was only at Rugby for a year with Ronald. In spite of this short overlap, and the four years difference in their ages, the boys became great friends and often wrote to each other after Harry had gone to Cambridge. One letter, which as it turned out was prophetic, was written Oct. 18, 1906, when Ronald was feeling rather despondent at the prospects of the School House XV:—

'Every hour you spend on coaching lower games, &c., this year will bear fruit next, and let's hope you'll captain a Cock House team your last year at School. You know how keen I am about this coaching of the lower games, and you may be sure of my best wishes and sympathy whether we're Cock House or not. So buck up, old man, and don't be disheartened.'

When the war broke out H. F. Garrett obtained a commission in the 6th East Yorks. Regt. He was in charge of a machine-gun section at Gallipoli, and was killed at Suvla Bay on Aug. 22, 1915. The following extracts are from a letter to his parents, written on the eve of his landing and going into action for the first and last time. The fearlessness for himself and the fear for his men are characteristic of his unselfishness, courage, and modesty.

'H.M.S. *Theseus*, Imbros Harbour,
'August 6th, 1915.

'The great push has begun, and I write this (as you see) from the boat which is taking us across. Long before you get this letter you will know the result of the move; it is evidently a great effort. Our own part in it (that of the XIth Division) is to land and occupy Suvla Bay (some miles north of Gaba Tepe), and then drive inland from there.

'I am very excited and a little afraid—not afraid in a physical sense at all, I am curious to notice—but a little afraid about acquitting ourselves with credit, me and my Section. Despite all one's efforts to foresee the real thing and prepare for it in one's training, the real thing is going to be something vastly different from anything we have done.

'I have a great responsibility: I may have decisions to make, and to make instantly, on which many lives will depend, and that thought frightens me. There are many fellows in the Section whom I like very much, and I hate the thought that through some blunder of mine their lives may be endangered.'

Ronald's play in the various football matches is described in the *Meteor* (xl) which gives his 'character' in this season as follows (p. 183): 'R. W. Poulton, '05, '06 (10 st. 7 lb.).—A really good centre three-quarter, with plenty of pace; has an excellent swerving run and makes good openings, but is sometimes inclined to pass rather wildly; a good tackle and fair kick.'

In the course of this Advent Term Ronald first met on the football field F. N. Tarr, who was to be a great friend and comrade at Oxford. In this season and the last the Rugby XV also included F. M. Stoop, who often played with Ronald in later years.

The accounts of the years were not written by the family at the end of 1907 or 1908, but an attempt was made to write both these years, together with 1909, at the end of this last year. Ronald's memories of the two earlier years, as he recalled them after this interval, are therefore brief.

From Hilda in January, just after Ronald had gone to Rugby:—

'How am I to exist without a certain cheerful thin bristly face, I don't know: I do so miss his curly little fingers, which is all as if I would say that the house is very different without you and I wish you were still here.'

Ronald's answer was certainly consoling and cheering :—

'My dearly beloved foot-on-skate skedadler, I hope you slide the light fantastic toe along the ice until you are perfect in the three, not to mention the rocker, or bracket, or grape-vine, or the homely simple spread-eagle. I had a lovely day yesterday skating on this large lake. A long row of about 20 of us used to join hands and skate as hard as we could: then the man at one end would act as a pivot and stop, and the other outside man would rush round and usually land on his back. (Ha! Ha! howls of applause.)

'I now do about 37 hours' Chemistry and Physics a week, so I am turning into a regular Professor.'

I had suggested to Ronald that he should write the article on flint implements for a new guide to the Isle of Wight which was being prepared under the editorship of Mr. F. Morey. When I visited Rugby for the Sports Ronald showed me the correspondence and I wrote to my wife: 'The Editor of the New Guide to the I. of Wight is tremendously pleased with Ronald's article on the palaeoliths of the Island. He says "it will do admirably"'.

The full title of the book, which was not published till 1909, is: '*A Guide to the Natural History of the Isle of Wight*. A series of contributions by specialists. . . . Edited by Frank Morey, F.L.S.', Isle of Wight: the County Press, Newport.

Pages 37-41 contain 'An Account of discoveries of palaeolithic implements in the Isle of Wight. By Ronald W. Poulton, Balliol College, Oxford': with two plates, of which a description is printed on p. vii of the preliminary matter.

The *Meteor* (xli, pp. 41-5) in the account of the Sports says of Ronald :—

'Once again, as we did last year, and as we seem likely to repeat next year, we have to chronicle the phenomenal success of Poulton; his all-round powers are well attested by his grand total of six-and-a-half marks for the Athletic Cup, including, as it did, victories in the Half Mile, the Quarter Mile, the 150 Yards, the 100 Yards, the Hurdles, and the High Jump. . . .'

And again 'Poulton's Quarter Mile in 55 seconds came near to breaking the record for the School Sports. . . .'

The School House won the Wrigley Cup by 168 to 111½ scored by Collins'. Ronald won the first Athletic Cup with 6½, S. E. Swann being second with 3½. Ronald was also successful in Rackets, winning the School Tie Finals with Cunningham (xli, p. 45).

1907 was the year of the Oxford Pageant, for which, as Margaret wrote: 'we had rehearsed steadily through the term in swamps of mud and rivers of rain.' Ronald came over from Rugby to see it:—

'It was a good show, particularly the point at which the fellow on the motor car fell into the river. I came back by 9.0 train, and when I got to the dormitory, I found that they had fastened up the electric light switches, reversed my bed, made an apple-pie, &c. But I got it straight, and woke them all up, so it was about all square.'

In the Summer Term Ronald gained the Senior Prize for Practical Chemistry. His cricket showed considerable advance this year, and he was made successively a member of the XXII (xli, p. 61) and of the XI (p. 85). His average of 18.88 for 10 innings, twice not out, made him third in the XI (p. 130). His 'character' on p. 131 is as follows:—

'R. W. Poulton.—An improving bat, who made some useful scores; was particularly conspicuous on the field for his smartness in ground fielding and safe catching.'

An O. R. friend, Basil Cozens-Hardy, wrote: 'I had not the opportunity of offering you a time-honoured "Allow me" on getting your XI. I said you would get it all right, but your false modesty protested against such an idea!'

Ronald's account continues: 'At Lords we gained a sensational win over Marlborough, and I contributed 4 and 29 not out, and caught a couple of catches.' In this match he played against his future Oxford friend Ronald Lagden, who made 1 and 17 and also bowled for Marlborough.



RONALD, AT RUGBY

From a photograph by Geo. A. Dean of Rugby, 1907.

'In September I went to Grasmere to join a party consisting of Billy Temple, H. H. Hardy, Dick Dugdale, "Ruth" Arbuthnot,¹ [Roger Gaskell and] H. W. B. Joseph, on a walking party. We had a fine week in a wet month, and had some splendid walks. We went to Scawfell, Scawfell Pike, Bowfell, Helvellyn and many others. At the end of the stay Dugdale and I went to Carlisle to meet J. Collins, who was taking us on the Roman Wall. It was lovely renewing our acquaintance with it. We had some gorgeous sunsets over the moors, and the river at Chollerford was looking its best. Dugdale and I returned to Carlisle, and, after a wretched music-hall where a person sang a song in which she protested that "she was fishing for us", while she tried to throw a large fishing-net over parts of the audience, we caught the night train south.'

To Hilda from Grasmere.

'This place is simply glorious. Grasmere is a beautiful lake surrounded by hills, about 6 miles from Windermere. The hills are simply lovely and the weather glorious. I don't think I ever imagined there could be such a lovely place. It was frightfully hot to-day, but there are sparkling streams every hundred yards, and one can drink any time.'

To Hilda from Marlston.

'Sept. 23.

'Well, we had a splendid time in the Lakes. I enjoyed myself frightfully. We also had a ripping time on the Roman Wall with J. C., who was kindness itself. We saw some Roman excavations going on. They had discovered masses of coin, dice, draughtsmen, &c. It was very interesting.'

It was during this visit to the Lakes with a party brought together by H. H. Hardy that Ronald first began to know intimately Dick Dugdale (Rev. R. W. Dugdale, C.F., M.C.), who became one of his greatest friends. The following memories of the visit were written by Mr. Dugdale:—

'Only a few incidents stick in my mind:—

'(1) We had a competition as to who could get down to

¹ Capt. A. H. Arbuthnot, London Regt., who was also with Ronald at Grasmere in 1908, died of wounds May 15, 1915, ten days after his friend's death.

breakfast first, because the first comer got a second helping of porridge and cream.

'(2) We nearly always shared the bathroom.

'(3) We used to take a double lunch each.

'(4) We each noticed that the other laughed uproariously at the jokes made by learned members of the party and were each surprised at the learning of the other. It came out in confidence that we neither of us understood a single word! After that we had no difficulty in laughing.

'(5) I remember Ronald saying one day as we were going up White Pike (I think it was) in the sweltering heat, "You don't mean to say you really like this." I was young enough to pretend I did.

'(6) One very cold day at Grasmere we bet Ronald 10/- he wouldn't bathe in the stream by which we had sat down to lunch. In half a shake he was practically undressed and we had to offer him large sums of money not to do it.

'I am sorry I can't write better about these things but I don't think anybody knows what friends we were to each other. We both knew that we came absolutely first with each other and therefore letter-writing and that sort of thing didn't matter a bit. Our correspondence was always spasmodic and very jerky: like our conversations. Our conversations never ended: a serious subject nearly always ended in the personal side which always interested us most—and therefore it is difficult to say what conclusion we came to on any matter. We always felt there was plenty of time—a whole lifetime of intimacy in front of us: and therefore there was no hurry. Things would develop of themselves: questions and difficulties would solve themselves. We discussed every subject under the sun, except football which came up very rarely: and then only if the personal side of it happened to be interesting.

'On the whole I think the thing that started Ronald's and my friendship was that we found we could both *enjoy* things with the same keenness and also laugh about everything in the same way. We had received the same training at Rugby and therefore at bottom our "Philosophy of Life" was the same. We went for the same things and looked upon life from the same standpoint. Hence nothing ever jarred even in the most intimate talks.'

Ronald's account continues: 'Soon after [Grasmere] was back in Rugby for my last winter term. It was certainly the term I shall look back on with the greatest pleasure.'

Some of his impressions of it are recorded in two letters to Janet, who had just gone to Wycombe Abbey for her first term:—

‘Sept. 29.

‘I have just found out the amount of work I’ve got to do this term and it perfectly appals me. Besides ordinary work I’ve got to find time to do two three-hour papers a week out of school and as much reading as possible. It will mean a terrific grind and no mistake. So you won’t be the only hard worked one.’

‘Oct. 13.

‘Much as I should like to write to you every Sunday I find great difficulty in getting time to write even every other Sunday. However, a promise is a promise (curiously enough) and I *must* do it, even if Dr. James says “Poulton, I can’t have you wasting your time writing to that small (?! How dare you) sister of yours when you ought to be working for a scholarship”, I should say “My dear fellow (I always talk to him like that), you talk rot, which is the most important, my *big* (that’s better) sister or the remote and far distant chance of ever securing a scholarship”. So you see what risks I run by writing to you.

‘I am sorry England didn’t ask you to play La Crosse against Ireland last week. I have written to find out why not.

‘Well I am so glad you like the school so much. I bet (naughty boy) you don’t like it as much as I do this ripping place. I *shall* be sorry to leave.’

To his Mother.

‘Mr. Payne-Smith has come back to Rugby and I am lunching with him to-day. To-night I am having supper with Mr. Evers to meet Donald [Head of the Rugby Home Mission] who is preaching this afternoon. And this afternoon I am having tea with Hardy. So you see on Sunday I do myself pretty well.’

Ronald’s natural dislike of ceremony and display appears in another letter to his mother, referring to a visit on Oct. 25 (*Meteor*, xli, pp. 133-5):—

‘We had a great fuss yesterday. Princess Henry of Battenberg came down to open a new wing of the Hospital

here. We received her in the Close. Dr. James was robed in the red robes of a D.D., and all the masters wore their hoods, and the Head of the School presented an address.

'The town was very gay, with painted scaffold poles and imitation flowers, &c. Mr. Bradby said the poles reminded him of cheese straws, and he always thought he smelt cheese when he walked out. There were fireworks in the town in the evening, but we weren't allowed down town at all. It seemed an extraordinary fuss about nothing. However, Rugby has never had a Royal personage for hundreds of years, and so they wanted to make a fuss.'

The great feature of the term was the football, of which Ronald wrote in his account of 1907:—

'Watson who had been Captain of the XV the previous year returned, but very kindly shared the Captaincy with me, or least I acted as a kind of secretary. We thought the XV would be a good one, but it turned out to be the finest the School has ever had. We won every match except one, and scored about 250 points against 59. We beat Uppingham and Cheltenham comfortably. At the same time the School House was easily Cock House. We won every match before time (with a lead of 35 points, the games are always stopped) and we only had 5 points scored against us.'

Ronald's 'character' was described in the *Meteor*, in prophetic words:—

'R. W. Poulton (S.H.), '05, '06, '07.—A brilliant centre three-quarter. Holding the ball in both hands, at arms length, he relies on his great pace and a most deceptive swerve to get through, and seldom without success. He gathers the ball beautifully, and has always combined excellently with his neighbours in the line. If his tackling improves, he will become a great player' (xli, p. 175).

The prospects of the team were discussed and the joint captaincy criticized by C. A. L. Payne in the *Tribune*, with portraits of C. C. Watson and Ronald.

Ronald referred to this criticism in the pencil draft of a long letter intended for the *Meteor*, but I think never sent. It was written probably in 1908 and is summed up

in the following suggestions which I have slightly shortened:—

I. That a post of Secretary be appointed in addition to the Captain.

II. That Remnants be managed by Caps, in order, each taking a day.

III. That Distinctions be given on the three Bigsides and the House Matches, and of course on any other games which the Captain and Secretary may have observed, but not otherwise.

‘I have been led to these conclusions’, he wrote, ‘by the arrangements of 1907. Notwithstanding all that the *Tribune* said to the contrary too many cooks did not spoil the broth. There was, I feel sure, no friction whatever between the two, and certainly it was a great relief to both to have only half the strain.’

The following letter was written by C. C. Watson on Feb. 21, 1917, a few months before he too gave his life for his country and for the world. Throughout these memories, recalled at the front, there breathes the noble and generous spirit of English Public School life at its best and highest:—

‘I will now try to put down on paper some of my recollections of Ronnie, though I fear it will be rather a poor attempt and will in no way do him justice, while my own school life was so intimately bound up in his, owing to our friendly rivalry at all games, that I am afraid that my memories will be too full of the letter “I”.

‘With regard to his athletic career at Rugby the finest performance I ever saw him make at football was against University College, Oxford, in 1907 [Nov. 5]. They had a very strong side indeed, having heard that we were out of the ordinary, and five minutes from time were leading by two points. Ronnie picked up the ball in his own twenty-five and made the most marvellous run right through, scoring the winning try. I remember standing in the middle of the field letting out an increasing crescendo of yells as he dodged man after man, being much too blown to follow up myself and too excited to think what I was doing. I have since seen him play for both Oxford and

England, but that was incomparably the best try I ever saw him score.

'Ronnie's influence in all athletic matters had the greatest possible results at Rugby. When I was a fag there, and during my first two or three years, there was very bad feeling between my house and the School House. It began over a football House Match dispute and the feeling was so strong that it was considered bad form to be seen walking down town with a School House boy! This was naturally a rotten thing for every one and soon changed when Ronnie got to the head of affairs. I remember one most fierce and exciting House Match which we won by a fluke by two points, and how in the last phase W. G. Michell, my House Master and the finest fellow in the world, raced up and down the touch line with tears in his eyes, protesting that the referee had overstepped the time limit by five minutes. Well, immediately it was over Ronnie, who was captain of the School House and terribly disappointed, came straight over to me and insisted on taking me down town and standing me a feed, an example which was followed by other members of the teams—a pretty considerable change from former days which a lot of us remembered.

'Ronnie was always the peace-maker. For instance, to tell a story against myself, a test game had been arranged to try several promising players: Ronnie picked the teams, he captaining one side and I the other. Entirely by accident his side turned out very much the stronger, Robert Cunningham who was Ronnie's greatest pal in the School House playing with him, and I had rather a rough time. Quite unjustly I thought Ronnie had done it on purpose to rag me, and departed from the field very ruffled. He saw I was annoyed and ran after me and I was very surly with him indeed; but he would not be denied where nine out of ten fellows would have got on their high horse, and insisted on carting me off with him, and I soon recovered. It was little things like that which showed his character and endeared him to us all.

'Unfortunately I never came across Ronnie much in the most intimate phase of school life, namely in his house and study, as it was very rarely that we had the opportunity of spending much time in each other's houses. Looking back on our school career as a whole the one thing that strikes me above all else is the fact that Ronnie was the perfect type of a "good winner".

Experience then and in other phases of life since has taught me that the vast majority of men can be good losers, but it is only the very favoured few who can be good winners. Ronnie possessed that gift *par excellence*; he never had an atom of side, was always totally unaffected, and although an easy first at nearly everything he put his hand to, seemed unaware of the fact altogether. As you can well guess, that side of his character touched me very closely, being as he was an easy first to my poor second in nearly every way, and I think it one of the greatest tributes to his character that he caused me to feel absolutely unconscious of the fact so that it did not gall me in any way.

‘I have not been able to get away from Ronnie’s character as it affected myself, and my own small doings, but that is naturally how I have the keenest recollection of him, and I cannot dissociate any memory I have of him from it. I am very glad however to have been given the opportunity of writing the above, and shall never forget the pride I feel in having been numbered as one of Ronnie’s friends.’

Returning to the Advent Term of 1907, the match between the School House and Michell’s was played Nov. 25. Ronald wrote to Hilda of his anticipations :—

‘To-day we are rather excited as Cock House Match begins at 3.0 and we haven’t been C. H. for 6 years, and we are going to be this afternoon for certain I think. [The match was won 43-5.] If we are C. H. there are several funny old customs here. First I shall go and be wept upon by Mrs. McIntyre who has been in a suppressed state of excitement for days. Whenever you go into her room she waves her hands and says “Are you ready for the Battle?” Then we have a tea in Hall with sausages—broken crockery paid for by the House. Then after tea we open a tin box enclosed in the brickwork behind the wainscoting in the fire-place, and put in a list of the House XV. Finally after Prayers we have Quad.Cheering, which consists of a five minutes rag in Quad. Then bed—thank goodness.

‘Hurrah for Saturday fortnight or three weeks when you will be down here.’

The last words referred to the House Supper, held in the Old Big School on Dec. 18. ‘We had a splendid

House Supper', he wrote, 'I had the usual speech to perpetrate, but it was pretty easy this year.' Ronald spoke for the 'House Games'.

All the term, in spite of the exciting events described in his letter to Hilda, Ronald was working hard for the combined scholarship examination in December. He had written on Oct. 20, to his mother:—

'With regard to preference for Colleges I put Balliol, Trinity, Christ Church as the order I should prefer. I like Teddie's idea and should of course love to go to Balliol anyhow. It would be nice to keep up the connection.'

It was an especial pleasure to me that, in addition to taking the regular scholarship papers, Ronald sent in the manuscript of the original work he had done upon the flint implements of the Isle of Wight. He wrote of the examination: 'I had a very nice week at home, though three hours papers twice a day are not much fun.' On Dec. 9 we went to Rugby to see him play in the match *v.* Cheltenham and on our way home from the station called at Balliol and found that Philip Guedalla had been awarded a Classical Exhibition and Ronald the Williams Exhibition in Natural Science. The Science Tutor, Mr. (now Brig.-Gen.) Harold Hartley, told us that Ronald's work was well up to Balliol Exhibition standard, and Mr. (now Prof.) H. B. Baker, F.R.S., that the other colleges would have been glad to take him as a scholar.

To his Father.

'Dec. 10.

'I am most awfully glad about the result, not so much for myself as for you. When I first came to Oxford I thought I hadn't got a ghost of a chance, when I finished I thought I had a faint chance, but I assure you the Exhibition was far more than I expected. I see they didn't award the Scholarship to any one. Last night was I think *quite* the happiest moment I have ever had. I got a telegram merely "Congratulations, Butler". I didn't know whether for Balliol or the Cheltenham match; but soon I had Teddie's wire and Guedalla's. The masters here

have been most awfully kind, and Dr. James is very pleased. Well, this term has been a perfect dream. I don't think any one has had a happier time here so far than I have, and I am so thankful I came to Rugby.

'With much love darling and many thanks for your letter.'

The letter enclosed A. D. Stoop's invitation to play with the Harlequins, and asking what I thought of it. 'Of course it is quite an exception, and I certainly should not suggest doing it again. It only means half a day away. I should be back to dinner.' 'It would be awfully good fun playing' he had written to his brother earlier in the term. In spite of these first thoughts Ronald finally decided not to accept, acting on the advice of his friend Mr. C. P. Evers, who considered that he was too young.

From the Headmaster.

'Dec. 10.

'I do *most warmly* congratulate you and Mrs. Poulton on Ronald's signal success. I do not know when anything of the kind has given me half the pleasure that this has; for when a boy who is a supremely good athlete is also a conscientious worker, sets the highest possible example of character and conduct, and is utterly unspoilt by all the homage he receives in a school and world which crowns and enthrones the athlete above all others—one can only thank God for his presence in our midst.'

Before returning to Rugby Ronald wrote to Mr. C. P. Evers:—

'We have just given two performances of two plays in our house and have got £37 from them. The large part goes to the United Girls' Schools Mission but I have prevailed upon my sister [Hilda] to give me somewhere about £7 for the Rugby H.M. I want to know what to do with it. Do you want it for the London or Birmingham Mission or what particular fund is most in need of it? If you like I will bring it back with me and you can take it and put it into the fund you think most needs it. I am sorry I couldn't grab more but I think my sister deserves the rest for her mission for all the trouble she has taken. We did *Browne*

with an E and My Lord in Livery. They went off splendidly. £37 isn't bad for only two performances in a private house. We got 150 people in the room—which was a pretty good squash.'

During this term Ronald left science and worked at mathematics and modern languages:—

'We had a good term's football and won four of our six matches, but we had lost a good many of our team. Dugdale did a record in the Crick Run [1 hr. 12 min. 20 sec., on March 14. *Meteor*, xlii, pp. 46, 53]. For the Sports we again got the Wrigley, and I got some more medals. I successfully passed "Smalls" at the end of term.'

Of a lecture given by Ronald on Feb. 1 (*Meteor*, xlii, p. 5) C. P. Evers writes:—

'Mention of the Roman Wall reminds me how Ronald lectured on the subject while he was at school to the Rugby School Natural History Society. There must have been 200 or more present including a good many masters. He had a lot of beautiful lantern slides and gave the lecture in a most lucid and interesting way. It was a great and almost unique achievement for any member of the school to lecture like that to the whole Society.'

On March 1 Ronald wrote to his mother in Italy telling her of the Natural History Society's prize for his paper on the flint implements of the Isle of Wight (*Meteor*, xlii, p. 30):—

'Well, last night Mr. Cumming gave out the N.H.S. prizes, and I have found that I have got the Distinguished Work prize, which is worth £5. I am awfully glad because it isn't always given, and only when the standard of the work is high enough. I shall be able to get a nice lot of books.'

He also wrote that, the day before, he had won the first prize for a Drop and Place Kicking competition.

His mother wrote, referring to the match *v.* T. V. Tolson's XV, on March 5: 'I am thinking of you to-day, playing your last match. All these last things are sad, but they are stepping stones to higher things.'

At the end of the football season Ronald received from an unknown admirer a silver cigarette case with his initials on it. An accompanying letter spoke of the pleasure the writer had received from his play in the football field, adding that his 'sporting all round play has had such an influence upon the other players, that it has raised the School XV far above the average'. Ronald's admirers were by no means limited to the school, for Mr. L. A. Hugh-Jones well remembers 'how the townspeople used to crowd the Close to see him play in foreign matches'.

On Feb. 20, Dick Dugdale persuaded Ronald to do the thing he most disliked—viz. to run in a long pounding race. Ronald was twelfth in 58 min. 29 sec., Dick being first in 49 min. 51 sec. (*Meteor*, xlii, p. 41):—

'Our last Easter Term I persuaded Ronald to run the Barby Village Bigside Run. He had done everything possible in the athletic line and I wanted him to run one Bigside before he left. Much against his will he did it. You have to "come in" ten minutes after the first man to count; as the ten minutes was nearly up I saw Ronald coming down the road very slowly towards the finish, and by pacing him in we just managed to do it. I don't think any one could have induced him to run another Bigside.'

'I was very stiff after it', he wrote to Janet a few days later. Then on March 18 he told her of another game in which he represented the school, and here as in football in company with the same great friend and rival, C. C. Watson: 'Yesterday we played Cheltenham at Fives. We won, but I bruised my hand pretty badly, and shan't be able to play for a day or two.' The *Meteor*, xlii, p. 43, states that this—a love match but with each game closely contested—was the first time Rugby had beaten Cheltenham in the Fives match.

To Janet, who had got leave from the Head Mistress to go to the Rugby Sports:—

'March 22.

'Many congratulations on your hockey success. I hope you keep in the team all right. We shall soon see you in the school team.

'No; I did not beat Watson [in the single fives competition]. I don't know why you should think that I should. I never thought I had a chance. However I very nearly *did* beat him.

'Hurrah for Friday. It will give you a lovely holiday in the middle of the term.'

From the *Meteor*, xlii, p. 52:—

'As was predicted in last year's *Meteor*, we have again to record the wonderful success of Poulton, who won no less than six events; for, although he lost the Half Mile to Swann this year, he just succeeded in wresting the Broad Jump from Watson, though the distance was less than that of last year and the year before.'

Ronald won the first Athletic Cup with 6, against 4 obtained by the second, S. E. Swann. The School House won the Wrigley with 174 against 89 gained by Michell's.

It will probably be convenient to recapitulate at this point, and print in tabular form the whole of Ronald's achievements in the Sports during his five years at Rugby, omitting the 300 Yards under 14½, in which he was first (39¾ sec.) in 1904, and the Steeple Chase under 16, in which he was second in 1904 and first in 1905.

It will be inferred from this table that Ronald was remarkable for his all-round powers rather than for great success in any particular event. He was least successful in the Half-mile and had no inclination at all to enter for still longer races. He told me that he believed the Quarter-mile was the event at which, with special training, he could do best; and this and the 150 yards were the two races in which he was always first whenever he was able to compete at Rugby.

Mr. C. P. Evers remembers that in the course of this term:—

'Ronald came to me and said that he and R. Cunningham had entered for the School Double Eton Fives, but they did not know how to play! they had never been on an Eton Court in their lives, and did not know the rules! So would I have a game with them and show them? Of

March	Broad Jump	100 Yards	Half Mile	Quarter Mile	High Jump	150 Yards	Hurdle Race, 120 Yards
1904	(Under 16) First: 16 ft. 4½ in.	(Under 14½) First: 12 secs. (Under 16) First: 12 secs.	(Under 14½) First: 2 min. 26½ secs.		(Under 16) Second.	(Under 16) First: 18½ secs.	(Under 16) Third.
1905	(Under 16) First: 17 ft. 7½ in.	(Under 16) First: 11½ secs.	(Under 16) First: 2 min. 29½ secs.	(Under 16) First: 59½ secs.	(Under 16) Second.	(Open) First: 16½ secs. (Under 16) First: 17½ secs.	(Under 16) First: 19½ secs.
1906	(Open) First: 19 ft. 6 in.	(Open) Second	(Open) Fourth.	(Open) First: 55½ secs.	(Open) Second: 5 ft. 1½ in.	(Open) First: 16½ secs. First: 18½ secs.	(Open) First: 18½ secs.
1907	Second: 18 ft. 10 in.	First: 10½ secs., 10½ in the heats.	First: 2 min. 14½ secs.	First: 55 secs.	First: 5 ft. ½ in.	First: 16½ secs. First: 17½ secs.	First: 17½ secs.
1908 (ground heavy)	First: 18 ft. 5½ in.	First: 10½ secs.	Fourth.	First: 55½ secs.	First: 5 ft. ½ in.	First: 16½ secs. First: 18 secs.	First: 18 secs.

course I was only too glad, so I got some one else—I forget whom—to make up a game. At the end of the afternoon Ronald and Cunningham were quite expert, and I believe I am right in saying that they won the competition. Probably the opposition was not very strong, for Eton fives here has never been as popular as it deserves to be. But anyhow it was rather a remarkable achievement.

We now come to Ronald's last term at Rugby.

'We had a poor cricket XI', he wrote, 'and won very few matches. But with an unpromising House XI we became Cock House, and thus had practically every Cup in the School. It was a good ending of my time at School.'

Ronald's batting average—27·96 for 20 innings, twice not out—was third in the School XI (p. 132). His best effort was 33 and 89 against M.C.C. and ground (*Meteor*, xlii, p. 110), although he made larger scores in matches with other houses—91 and 85 against Stallard's, and the figure mentioned in the following letter from his friend C. C. Watson, who had left Rugby and was on the Continent:—

' July 17, 1908.

'I've never seen such a fellow as you; you're always working.

'I should think you are a bit more pleased with yourself about cricket, you're too beastly modest for words. If I'd made 148 in Cock House match [*v.* Collins'] I should have told every one I met instead of saying I was "a bit keener on cricket now": I've just got the *Meteor*.

'I can really sympathize with you for the last few days of next week, I know what it is; it was awful.'

Ronald wrote of the Match at Lord's:—

'We went up to Lord's the day before the end of Term, and the next two days played the match against Marlborough. The papers will tell you of our failure in every branch of the game on that day, and with scores of 14 and 4 I can hardly be considered to have showed great promise.'

The *Meteor* summed up his play during the last season

at Rugby: 'A vigorous batsman, but with a partiality for the leg side, who has been very useful to the side on several occasions. A very fine field at third man and in the deep' (p. 132).

Ronald wrote in his account of 1908:—

'I feel sure that no one enjoyed every moment at school more than I did. I felt a pang at leaving, and the feeling was increased very much when the school went back in October. I made a large number of friends at school, among whom were several masters, and it is pleasant to think that one is at least welcome there at any time.'

To his Mother.

'July 26.

'My last Sunday here is nearly finished, and it makes me feel very sad. I shouldn't think anybody could have enjoyed his time more here than I; and it is a pretty big wrench leaving the place, but I suppose it has to happen some time. We had a splendid sermon from the Head Master this afternoon, talking all about leaving. He put it very strongly that one's boyhood is over, and now one has to make a start in life for good or for bad. I suppose he is right, but certainly the boyhood that I have had and am having has been a tremendously happy one. And I am quite certain that there is no school where a boy could get so much good as Rugby.

'There are such a crowd of ripping people I have got to say good-bye to. It will take me all my time to-morrow and Tuesday morning. I am out to almost every meal now.

'With much love, darling, for the last time with this crested paper.'

The following letter from his mother he always kept in his leather pocket-case:—

'This is probably the last letter I shall ever write to you as a School Boy. I can't tell you what a joy your School career has been to me, also dear Teddie's. I have come to love Rugby and all belonging to it, and I am sure you feel the same. I hope most sincerely that your College life will be even happier.'

Hilda remembered that 'after Ronald had been at Rugby a little while, he absolutely loved going back and told me that he looked forward to it and went off with no feeling of regret at all. I don't think there are many other boys and girls, even those who are supremely happy at school, who do not rather hate having to go back after the holidays.' And even Ronald in the early years, as Edward recalls, had rather a harassed, preoccupied look on the last day.

The Headmaster wrote to us before the end of term :—

'Though Rugby, I hope and think, has done no little for your sons, they in their turn have done much for Rugby: and in especial I can never be too appreciative of what Ronald has done in my own House to keep the tone and standard what they should be. It is an incalculable help when a boy of his athletic and intellectual capacity sets an example of a blameless life and active service in the Vith.'

From Ronald's last Report.

'We shall miss his cheery presence, his athletic capacity, his keenness for the House, and his high example, more than I can say. But we shall all watch his Oxford career with interest and (I am sure) with pleasure. He has worked well and deserved success.'

From the School Marshal.

'He was quite the leader of all that was good at Rugby. He was kind and gentle in speech and manner, and yet he commanded the willing obedience of the whole School.'

V

THE RUGBY MISSION AND BOYS' CAMPS: 1905-1908

Those who knew him and loved him will carry with them memories of him till the end: thoughts of him will cheer them and inspire them: they will thank God that he lived and was what he was.—From Report by Capt. C. P. EVERS, Hon. Sec., in 27th Annual Report, for 1915, of the Rugby School Home Mission (p. 8).

THE suggestion that Ronald should join the 1905 Camp was made by his brother Edward, and by Mr. C. P. Evers. He was also strongly urged by H. F. Garrett, who wrote in the course of the Summer Term giving full details of the life, and the day after the Rugby-Marlborough match travelled down to New Romney with the two brothers. The camping-ground, which came into the possession of the School in 1907, lies on the Kentish coast, about 12 miles west of Folkestone.

Capt. C. P. Evers writes:—

‘It was rather an experiment, for he was not yet 16, and it is seldom that boys as young as that are quite at home at camp. But the experiment proved a great success, and after that he came regularly. His connexion with the Mission was in every way a happy part of his life. Of course every one there loved him and he was always of the utmost help in looking after the games.

‘During his first 2 or 3 visits to camp he was not specially interested in the Mission work as such, or in the boys themselves. Indeed he was too young to be able to give much serious thought to the bigger problems of Mission work. At the beginning he frankly came because he liked the free and easy life, the games, the jolly spirit which pervades camp, and the fellowship of other Rugbeians who formed the staff. But it was the camp which gave him, I think, the inspiration towards social work,

which was beginning, at the end, to mean so much to him. Towards the end of his time at school he was beginning to think about the more serious side to our Mission work, and in Jan. 1908 he was sufficiently interested to give to our funds part of the proceeds of some theatricals at Wykeham House. From Rugby it was natural that he should go on to similar work at Balliol, with ever-increasing power and sympathy, and from Oxford to work at Reading which seemed destined to be of immense social value.'

Ronald wrote of the 1905 Camp :—

'The Camp consists of 2 old connected coastguard cottages, of which one is used by the Rugby Mission and the other by an old sailor who lives there. It is only some 3 yards away from the sea at high tide and in the winter is often flooded to the second story, in fact only last winter the sailor and his wife spent a sleepless night standing by their upstairs bedroom window, prepared at any moment to jump into a boat alongside and row to safety. Our week there was a very enjoyable one. After 3 nights sleeping in a bed, I gave way to my superiors and slept out on a straw mattress stretched on some concrete which lay round the house. I had a bad night and was finally driven in by rain, but all the other nights were quite comfortable ones. As regards our doings during the day, we played cricket and football on the beach, and washed up, and many other such things. We went expeditions to Lydd and New Romney to play cricket matches, and altogether the whole thing was a great success.'

A letter from an older Rugby friend who became Lt.-Col. C. Bushell, V.C., D.S.O., refers to the visit of the Mission Boys to the School in the Summer Term of 1906: 'I heard that you made yourself a most welcome comrade to the Mission Boys! Congratulations on so doing and on storming so boldly the heights of public opinion.' These few words are evidence of the zest with which Ronald threw himself into this work before he was 17, treating the Club boys as friends instead of in the rather stiff manner—due to shyness or to the fear of what others might say and think—which the average

Public School boy would commonly adopt and consider to be the proper attitude. Ronald's account of the 1906 Camp is very brief.

Towards the end of the Summer Term of 1907 Ronald wrote telling us of his wish to go to the Camp for the Boys' week. He had already written of this and the Mens' week to his brother saying, 'I think you would, and I know I shall, enjoy the Boys' week more.' As he was also going to the Lakes in September we were a little restive at the inroads into our family gathering at St. Helens. Ronald's answer to a letter putting this point of view shows the serious importance he already attached to the Mission:—

'Don't think that when I made arrangements to go to Camp, I did not long to be with you. It's quite true I did make arrangements and several boys from the House were going with me for two or three days. I really thought of going because it is very important to try and encourage people to go while still in the School to make them see something of the Mission which they are always subscribing for.

'Hardy and Evers were very disappointed when I said I couldn't go, but it doesn't matter a bit as others are sure to turn up. We shall have a lovely time together and I am looking forward tremendously to seeing you again.'

But much as we wanted to have him with us with only one break, we could not persist, and so, early in August, he wrote to C. P. Evers:—

'After many persuasions and talkings I have succeeded in getting leave to go down to Camp from Monday next till Thursday. It isn't very long, but I couldn't arrange for more. I lose no time in getting down as I leave here at 7.30. I suppose you wouldn't like to meet me. It isn't a very suitable time, during lunch.'

Of the Camp in 1908, the first after leaving Rugby, Ronald wrote to his brother: 'We have had a splendid week at Camp. The weather was glorious, and we had no rain. There were lots of very nice people there, and I stayed the week-end with Hardy, Billy Temple, Hawkes-

worth, and several others. It really was a splendid time.' 'Quite the nicest Camp I have ever had', he wrote to C. P. Evers from the Rectory, Lydd, where 'last night I got all the sleep I wanted'.

The Rev. C. S. Donald, Warden of Rugby House, 292 Lancaster Road, W., has recalled memories of Ronald at the Rugby Mission :—

'You ask a difficult task. It is not easy to be definite and to give an impression of Ronnie is like having to describe a fragrance or a luminosity. Wherever he was and however many were present he always quite unconsciously "occupied the stage". He got nearer the ideal standard than any other I have met, I think. The men and boys of the club here loved him dearly: his death made a deeper impression than any other event of this horrible war.

'I first knew him at our Mission Camps when he was still at school and it is typical that, of those early Camps, he is the only one whom one remembers as having been there (except the regular staff). An officer of the Wiltshires who was there in those days told me this week he could remember no one by name who was there 8 years ago except Poulton. He was even then the life of the Camps—lively enough any way—and he was always "with the boys" instead of shyly staying with the staff. This was also typical of him.

'He often when here, in Notting Dale, used to come "visiting" with me in the poorest streets. I remember taking him to one "furnished room" of the worst description here to see a sick boy, and his amusement at seeing amongst the few wretched pictures on the wall, his own portrait cut out of the *Daily Mirror*.'

The following letter from Mr. H. C. Bradby of Rugby speaks of Ronald and the Mission Boys at the School :—

'I cannot help writing, although a stranger to you, to tell you how dreadfully we feel the loss of Ronald. I was *very* fond of him and *very* proud of him as a Rugbeian. If ever one felt despondent, as a schoolmaster and a lover of Rugby, because of individuals whom one didn't care to think of as representing the school in the outside world the thought of Ronald cheered me up, and of all he was

doing and going to do. I have known this place intimately since I came as a boy in 1882 and I know of no Rugbeian in all those years who had a wider or better influence. It was better than a hundred sermons to the school, who looked up to him as a great football player, to see him come down with the Rugby Club absolutely unpretentious and jolly.

'It is very hard to go on with the old tasks while the best and noblest to whom one looked with such hope for the future are being swept away. It will not lessen your sorrow but it may help you to bear it when you realize how crushing the blow is to so many whom you do not know.'

This section is brought to its close with thoughts written down by Mr. C. S. Donald after hearing of Ronald's death and reading the perfectly genuine but one-sided accounts of him in the papers:—

'On May 7 the news came that Lieut. R. W. Poulton Palmer had fallen. Many of the papers published his portrait with considerable description of his career as an athlete of the first rank, the number of his international caps and the unrivalled brilliance of his play. Some too noted that he had lately inherited a fortune which he had not lived to enjoy. The space which the Press gave to his obituary is evidence of the interest which the world of sport took in their favourite player. Thousands had seen him play, and the notice of his death must have recalled many a tense moment when the crowded stands rose as one man with "Poulton's through" amid the long-drawn roar of "Eng—land".

'One hesitates to say more of any one man in these days when ten thousand unsung heroes are giving their all that we may live, lest we injure that one by disproportionate praise. And yet it seems a pity that that section of the sporting public who were interested in Poulton should not have the picture more complete and should associate him only with dramatic football and a large fortune.

'How many of those, escaping early from the office to "bury an aunt" at Twickenham or motoring down by road with imprecations on the goods van which blocked the way, knew that the little chap in sackcloth apron and leather cap hanging behind that same van had a similar

purpose in his small head and as fruitful a domestic bereavement as their own? All were going to see Poulton play in the afternoon, but he was also going to play with Poulton in the evening at his club. His portrait found a place on many a greasy wall, and still I know is hid in many a grubby pocket, and in many a boyish heart.

'How many of those who saw England play South Africa, the match lost but ever memorable for one unequalled run, knew that the hero of that lightning movement had climbed a crazy stair the night before to console with his bright presence a dying coster child?

'How many of those who knew him as a Varsity star of the first magnitude knew that he was leaving the gates of Balliol, not for Vincent's or the Grid, but to spend the evening with the paper boys and golf caddies in St. Ebbe's?

'He seemed an anomaly to them at first. Did not Blues rag in the High o' nights? They soon discovered what many, mechanics of Newton Heath, biscuit-makers of Reading, the gamins of Notting Dale, the men of the Berkshires, his intimates at Rugby, Oxford, and since, have also discovered, that life had become enriched by contact with a rare and most beautiful spirit, at the thought of whose coming the blood ran faster, in whose presence all that was mean and unworthy was impossible, and who left behind him the freshness and joy of the mountain winds. Ronald Poulton seemed crowned with all the graces—not only those which the world most covets, wealth, athletic pre-eminence, physical beauty—but with a singular humility, purity and courage, and so wide and generous a heart that it had to give itself everywhere and most where such gifts were most wanted. Small wonder that from many a van boy and coster, shopman and mechanic, yes, even from the little tie-maker and laundry hand, in one corner of London at least the word went round in blank distress, "Mr. Poulton is dead". The thought that he, and such as he, have "happened" is the best corrective to pessimism. They are the true riches which neither war nor death are able to destroy.'



RONALD

BINO RAE

AN UPSET IN THE THAMES BACKWATERS, BETWEEN OSNEY AND WYTHAM, OXFORD.

From a photograph by Edward Rac in the Summer Term of 1911.

VI

BALLIOL: 1908-1911

The world will indeed be a poorer place now that he is gone.—
From the Trenches, May 24, 1915, by Capt. and Adj. ROBY M. GORCH,
Sherwood Foresters, at Rugby S.H. and Oxford with Ronald. Killed
near Gommecourt, July 1, 1916.

I think often of him and of you ; but of him with pride, and confidence that if we could see all, even those who have most to mourn would mourn 'not as men without hope'.—THE MASTER OF BALLIOL.

BEFORE Ronald went up to Balliol, the party of the year before met again at Grasmere, whence he wrote to Janet :—

'Sept. 11th.

'We have just come home after a very long day, but it has been a glorious day—the only day in fact that we have been quite dry and warm. We first of all biked 6 miles, then we walked 9 miles to Scawfell Pike, and then on to Scawfell where people climb, then we walked down to a beautiful lake called Wast-water, 6 miles, then a hard uphill walk of 9 miles. Then biked home and after dinner to-night we walked for 5 miles in a perfect moonlight. It makes altogether 30 miles walking and 12 riding. It has been the day we have waited for.

'Well, Jane, many happy returns to you. By Jove, you are getting old, aren't you?—let me see how much older am I than you—ahem! I am thinking of buying some nice surprise present at Oxford for you. I am coming home Monday, so that I shan't be home much before you. I hope you are having a ripping time. I expect you are, but I guess you are never so tired in the evening as I am. I am absolutely dog-tired, and my feet have very nearly given way. I have several blisters and bruises on my toes. Altogether it is a very strenuous life, but I have never eaten as much as I do here. One is always thinking of the next meal. To-morrow we are having a slack day, I think and hope: at least we are having breakfast at 9, which is a great thing.

'We shall have a nice holiday ending together, shan't we? What day do we do the Franco-Brit.? We must glance into the pictures and the machinery hall and some other places before we start amusing ourselves.

'A man called Podmore has been walking with us [p. 6], and his sister goes to Wycombe next term into one of the Abbey houses. If she is as nice as he is you had better cultivate her acquaintance.'

From Ronald's account of 1908, written at the end of 1909:—

'On Thursday, October 8th, 1908, I slept my first night in Balliol. Everything was very delightful and new. I started with the Engineering School under Prof. Jenkin. During the term I passed Chemistry and Physics preliminaries and Additional. The Engineering was very interesting, but of course I didn't do much of it, as I had the other exams. to pass.

'My diary for the term is uninteresting except in so far as it gives a true record of the number of meals I partook of at other people's expense. My first two or three weeks were good days for my inside. I lived to eat rather than ate to live. Thus on October 15th, 16th, and 17th I had 20 invitations to meals, 9 of which I accepted! I accepted three invitations to dance during the term, but cut them all, since, when it came to the point, I hadn't the courage to go, as my knowledge of caracoling was somewhat rudimentary. Later in the term I was elected in the Brackenbury Society and the Shaftesbury.'

Ronald brought forward his first motion at the former Society, early in the following term: 'That this House views with alarm the increasing luxury of the age.'

On Nov. 13th, Mr. Mott, founder of the 'World's Student Christian Federation', spoke in Balliol Hall and his address made a great impression on Ronald.

Of three letters to Janet at Wycombe Abbey, the two written in term give some account of his doings, but the series is for the most part a touching crescendo of entreaty for replies.

'Oct. 28th, 1908. Balliol.

'I am almost too ashamed to write you, owing to my long delay, but I must take courage and compose a peace-

making kind of epistle. But, after all, am I always to start? You might have written first, and then, without fail, I should have replied. But still —. I am sitting here after having been to a football practice and am patiently waiting for the water to boil: then I can have a hot bath and so get clean. It is just boiling now, so I shall get dressed and finish this letter before rushing out to tea.

* * * * *

‘I have now changed satisfactorily and am feeling fairly clean, which is a great relief. I have to go out to-night at 8 and 9, and have to go to the Laboratory from 5.30 to 7, and have to write an essay after all that, so you can realize how full my usual day is.

‘Are you going to get into the Lacrosse House Team?

‘Collier has just come to take me off to tea, but I am determined to finish. On Monday I am going to Rugby for the day, and am also, I think, going to stay the night. I am very busy here going out to meals every day almost and they take up so much time. No more now. Please write me a letter.’

‘Nov. 9th.

‘I did write to you, didn’t I? But I have heard or seen nothing of you. When I go home I ask—“Is Janet alive or has she gone to the South Pole?” And I am told she is very well, but complains that people don’t write to her. But, after all, you must return the compliment. Please realize that this is No. 2 and you haven’t written one.

‘How is the world treating you? You may have seen that they have kicked me out of the team; I don’t know whether permanently or not.

‘Yesterday I went up to London to play against the Varsity for the Harlequins. It was a beastly game, and I should have much rather played hockey for the Varsity, as I had been also invited.

‘Are you in the Lacrosse Team for the house?

‘I am going to the “Mikado” Saturday with Harry Tyndale,¹ and I hope to the “Yeomen of the Guard” on Thursday.

‘Much love and kisses.’

¹ Lieut. H. E. G. Tyndale, King’s R. Rifle Corps; wounded at Hooge, July 31st, 1915.

'Dec. 14th. Wykeham House,
'Oxford.

'Madam,

'I have waited many months in patience for a letter, but none have been forthcoming. I say to myself—Why is this? What can have happened? Is she alive?—The answer comes back from the shades of High Wycombe—She's a little bit of all right, but she hasn't time to write to that absurd person who has only written 3 times—after all one must write 10 or 20 times to get one answer. She is much too interested in a book, "ships that pass in the day", no "night", to worry about you, you despicable little anthropoid. So I answer sadly—Right ho! What ho! Tatcho! Then I must write even again. I must write for the third time and expect no answer, and in addition I must prepare a little present, price 9d., for her on her return on Thursday, so that she may just condescend to notice the existence of a brother who after all is only 3 years younger (or older) than her.

'I hope this finds you Cock House at La Crosse, and adorned with many cups. No more now, with much love,

'Your loving brother,

'(the second one. Do you ever remember ever having seen him or written to him?)

'Ronald.

'That *is* his name, though you might not think it.'

The year 1909 opened at Morgins, where Ronald, Hilda, and Margaret were having their first experience of Swiss winter sports.

'The New Year came in during our first night at Morgins-les-Bains, Switzerland. We had a snowy journey and found that everything at Morgins was suited for winter sports. We skied, skated, tobogganned and danced every day for a fortnight. I learnt the gentle art of dancing through the kind help of Miss Manns, and certainly improved in skating. Ski-ing I found difficult and aggravating, but also fascinating. We went expeditions up the slopes for lunch. These were not particularly delightful, as it meant carrying one lady's skis (usually Margaret's) up the hill, and being unable, owing to the balling of the ski, to slide down again. The objections to the place were

minor ones, but pretty numerous. There was not enough sun on the rink. The hotel was deficient in heat and light; and dry bread is not exciting food for tea. However, it was a lovely fortnight. We had a crowded journey home. The trains were all full and I and many others slept on the corridor floor.'

To Janet.

' March 12th.

'So overjoyed am I at the delightful letter I got from you to-day that I had to write off again to you. To-morrow I go to Leicester to play for the Harlequins against Leicester. I return to beloved Rugby to stay the week-end with the St. Hills. I have to come back anyhow Wednesday to do a Viva for Divinity Exam. I have just been in for. And then I go up to London to stay with Teddie, and finally on Saturday I play for England *v.* Scotland at Richmond. The others are all coming up. I only wish you could come. On Sunday morning I start for the Pyrenees. So I am going to have a very busy time. But I am looking forward to the I. of W. and seeing you, you darling, most of all. Margaret went and watched the Wycombe Abbey *v.* United yesterday. I wish you had been well, and we could all have come and watched. You see in the I. of W. we will play one match in the first week, if we can raise a team, but without you and Teddie it will be very difficult. Anyhow, after you come, we will have a game and the side will be something like this, I suppose:—

Father.

Ernest. Margaret.

Teddie.

Hilda. Cardew. Ronald. Janet. Olive.

I don't know how we shall do it. But anyhow we must get some games. With much love, darling,

'Your loving brother.'

At the end of the Lent term Ronald went down to Bermondsey and stayed two days with his brother at the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission. Then came the visit to Vernet-les-Bains in the Pyrenees. 'There I met Mrs. Temple and William, and we had a lovely week. We

worked about 6 hours a day and we walked, in weather as hot as August, into the snow.'

Mr. Temple writes:—

'It was an altogether delightful time, but my clearest memory is of his immense pride in his packing; on the journey home his bag was opened at least half a dozen times and offered for our inspection; it began as a real pleasure in his skill, but went on as a game.'

Of the first Summer Term there was little to say:—

'Free of all preliminary exams., I now had only my finals to look forward to. That was the difficulty—they were so far off, but writing now [at the end of 1909] they seem horribly near.'

The following letter was written by Ronald in July from Blaenau Festiniog, where he was working as one of a map-making class:—

'North Western Hotel.

'MY DEAR HILDA & ERNEST,

'I can think of no more perfectly sweet idea than of writing to you both together. Isn't it too pathetic (pronounced parthetic)?

'“Here am I, waiting at the Church”,¹ etc.—No, trying to see though eyes bleared by mud and fleas, no flies, and seeds and rocks, and bricks and mortar, and straw and nails, and motes and beams, &c.

'We have been—that is Avery and a friend, in a car, I with Baker, a Balliol man, on my carrier, Stark and a friend on another motor bike. We went first to Conway for lunch, and then to Menai Bridge for tea, and back for dinner—83 miles with a man on the carrier. The bicycle has now gone 283 miles without a breakdown of any kind except a loose nut. By the bye, perhaps you didn't hear of my delightful run from Rugby—150 miles, and here in time for dinner.

'We work pretty hard here: go out at 9.30 and level, survey, and triangulate in order to draw a map of the district at the end. We get back at 6.30 and have dinner,

¹ Hilda remembered that the words are part of a song beloved by the boys of the Rugby Mission and a continual source of amusement to Ronald.

and after dinner we draw out plans and play billiards. It's pretty dull, but it's not at all good weather. It rains every day and we are always getting wet. The country is very fine, and it was lovely to-day by a lake at the top of Capel Curig.

'I am in great fear of a policeman asking for my licence, because I have lost it and haven't got my number-registered, so it will be rather a disaster if I am hauled up. But we must hope for the best.

'How are you getting on? Many thanks for the card. I thought the wedding a great success, and everyone seemed very struck with your beautiful manly tone of voice (Ernest), and gentle modulated accents (Hilda).

'No more now. Love to both.'

Ronald wrote of his second Michaelmas Term:—

'The Engineering went on. I started Thermodynamics seriously, and we pretty well went right through it during the term. At the same time I did a good deal of machine drawing.

'On Nov. 27th I went to Rugby and lectured on Surveying to the N.H.S. The lecture must have been very technical and boring, but they took it very well.'

Some of the lighter events of the term are described in a letter to Janet:—

'Nov. 15th. Balliol.

'How are you getting on? Thanks awfully for your letter. *But* you haven't told me (1) Are you in the La Crosse team? (2) Are you going to Rhodean (or Rodean) to play? You are a great surprise I must say—telling me that you wouldn't get into the House I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, VIII, IX, X, XI, XII, XIII, XIV, XV, &c. (I don't know how many there are in a game). You're a marvel!

'I may come and see you on Dec. 2nd. What do you think? Term is getting on. What Ho!

'If you want to see an account of a match in which I played well, look for the Harlequins *v.* Northampton in the papers to-morrow. I got in three times and dropped a goal.

'I have got the sack from the 'Varsity, which is rather annoying, isn't it?

'To-morrow, the Pelhams' dance: I have quite forgotten how to, however. Tuesday, our College yearly dinner:

Wednesday, dine Pelhams': Thursday, *Gondoliers* at the Theatre: Friday, Corpus smoking concert: Saturday, *Mikado*. There's a frivolous week. I mustn't do it. It's too bad. I must work.

'I do so much want to hear about you. Mother, Father and Aunt Diana have just been in to have chocolate with me after the Balliol Concert.

'Well, Jane darling, much love.

'I hear you are playing before the whole School. You ought to play at the Balliol Concert. You are again a marvel.'

Then on Nov. 24th, on hearing at last of the place in the School La Crosse Team, he wrote: 'Heartiest congratulations. I only heard yesterday. It is perfectly splendid. I am glad.'

After term came the Trial match England *v.* the South, and a visit to Rugby:—

'I stayed with Dr. James for the end of term and his leave-taking. He was wonderful. He made 4 speeches at different occasions, and in each he was wonderfully restrained, and kept clear of the personal element. I think anyone who was in the house with him must feel a deep affection for him.'

'At Christmas lunch, which was sumptuous as usual, there sat down—Father, Mother, Teddie and Frida, Hilda and Ernest, Margaret and Max, Janet and Ronald—Nos. 1, 2; 5, 6 married couples; Nos. 3, 4; 7, 8 engaged couples; Nos. 9, 10 on the shelf, as yet. The presents were numerous, though as far as I was responsible not particularly costly. And now I write this the day after, with the effects of Christmas lunch still upon me, and I cannot say what the last few days of the year will bring forth for us. All I say is that we hope to play a Boxing Day game of hockey to-morrow; and Father, Mother, Janet, Max, Margaret and I hope to go to Switzerland to celebrate the New Year among the snows.'

From Ronald to his Balliol friend, Keith (T. K. H.) Rae.

'Dec. 27th. Wykeham House, Oxford.

'MY DEAR KEITH,

'I got your letter just as I came back from the Carols at Magdalen. I don't know whether you have ever heard

of it. We meet in Magdalen Hall, in which is a huge Xmas tree. The Magdalen Choir then sing the first half of the Messiah. I never heard anything like the boy's voice in my life. He was simply like a lark. He jumped at the high notes and they came quite clear and loud. After the Messiah we had an interval and ate sandwiches and mince pies and had hot spiced drinks. Then the lights were turned out and the candles on the Christmas tree lit, and they sang Xmas Carols—unaccompanied mostly. About 10 minutes before 12.0 they sang "Adeste Fideles". Then we waited quietly till the College clock struck, then they sang "Gloria in Excelsis". As a fellow said to me—"It is the most reverent evening of the whole year."

'I have been writing an account of the year all to-day. We always do it in our family. And we all read our accounts to each other to-night.

'Well, old chap, a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. I am quite sick of football and am going to Switzerland for a week on Wednesday. I have had a talk with Harold [Mr. H. B. Hartley], and I have got to work next term, so I shall chuck everything that I can except the [Boys'] Club. I want to stick on with it, though I shall have to limit my number of attendances. But they shan't be fewer than last term. I felt a beast at the end of term. But one can't find time for everything one wants to do.

'I am getting a bit fed up with all the engaged couples hanging about this house. They are very jolly but they don't want to see you, so you have to clear out. Luckily I have got a room I can work in without fear of disturbing anyone.'

During our stay at Wengen in January my wife received the letter from her eldest brother, the late Rt. Hon. G. W. Palmer, which led Ronald to think of the Reading Factory as his career in life. There had been no doubt from earliest childhood that he was extraordinarily fitted by nature for the Engineering profession, but his capacity and sympathies were so deep and wide that other ideas were forced on the minds of some of his friends. Those who met him in the O. T. C. thought that he was obviously meant for the Army, while his friends at Rugby

were clear that he ought to be a Schoolmaster. And as a matter of fact this last thought had taken a considerable hold upon him in the Christmas Vacation of 1909-10, having been aroused by overtures from Rugby and strengthened by the merry party of Rugby friends at Wengen. Ronald felt strongly, as he once wrote to Keith Rae, that no one ought to be a Schoolmaster unless he loved the work; but he had no doubts about himself on this score. However, his love for Engineering was as strong as it could be, and knowing that no profession could give fuller opportunities for influencing men and boys, Ronald had no hesitation when the offer came. And once the choice was made he never had any doubts; his way became clearer with each step that he took.

The great business, created in chief part by Ronald's grandfather, offered endless opportunities certain to call forth the powers of work and of sympathy with which Ronald was so richly endowed; then too, there was the appeal of family tradition. Thus it came about that from this point, at first gradually but more and more fully as time went on, Ronald's life became shaped and directed towards the great work that a happier future would have held for him.

My brother-in-law was anxious that Ronald should be warmly received by the head of the Engineering Department. But there was no cause for anxiety, for the manager wrote after the interview, 'he is a boy after my own heart'.

Until the time when he became intimately associated with his nephew, my brother-in-law had seen and known little or nothing of Rugby football, and he naturally looked for further evidence of Ronald's powers to succeed in the career he proposed for him. So, soon after our return from Switzerland, Mr. Harold B. Hartley, Science Tutor at Balliol, wrote the following impression:—

'You asked me to write a few lines giving my general impression of Ronald's character and capacity; I have spoken to those of my colleagues who have seen much of him in College. I find they agree with everything I have

to say and would be very glad if necessary to support my opinion.

'Ronald did some work with me when he was thinking of taking up mining, and he was a most interesting and receptive pupil. He has shaped well at Engineering, especially if one considers how many outside interests he has had during the last two years.

'He has a very practical mind and he should develop into an excellent man of business; he thinks clearly, is methodical by nature, and is receptive of new ideas.

'He has been a most valuable man in College, as there is no part of College life into which he has not entered with keenness. He knows almost everybody, and his position both in athletics and as an Exhibitioner of the College has given him much influence with different types of undergraduates. It is some years since we have had anybody who was so obviously fitted to take part in the management of a large concern. Ronald has a genius for dealing with men; his extreme modesty as regards his own attainments, his tact and good nature win friends for him everywhere.

'I feel that I have not put the case in his favour nearly so well as I could wish, but I hope it is sufficient.'

Although Ronald's future was settled, there were still two years before he would leave Oxford to begin his life in Reading, and in the meantime his work in Engineering for the Schools became of more importance than ever. In the Lent Term of 1910 he wrote of 'attending lectures and laboratory work on Freezing Machines, Gas Engines and Turbines: all very interesting'.

During this term Ronald read a paper before the Anthropological Society on our Palaeolithic finds, erroneously described as Neolithic in the account of the meeting (*Oxford Magazine*, March 3, 1910, p. 240).

To Janet.

'March 27th. Eastbourne.

'How long is it since you and I corresponded? Before the days of steam engines I feel sure. Well, here I am, and you haven't an idea what I am doing. Well, I will give you an account of my doings up to date. When

I last wrote I was in the J.C.R. of Balliol Coll. I suppose I went to bed that night, and many other nights, and finally, as always happens, term ended. So on Monday I went to Rugby (I don't remember if I have ever been there before); then I went north to Little Stretton, two miles from Church Stretton, which is 10 miles from Shrewsbury. There were 9 of us in an old farm-house called the "Malt House". All the rooms lead from one to the other, and we had feather beds! However, we did 8 hours' work a day, which was good; also we had a game of golf in the afternoon on a perfectly precipitous links. Well, yesterday I came down to Oxford. The trains were Sunday trains, so I had a five hours' wait at Shrewsbury. But I went up to the School and there met a man I knew, and I was shown all over. Then I came down, and stayed a night at Wykeham House with father who goes down to the I. of W. to-day. Then this morning I caught the 9.10 train and am now on my way to Eastbourne to stay a week-end with the Rev. F. S. Williams of Eastbourne College who used to be a tutor at the School House. On Monday I am going to Broadstairs on a reading party with Billy Temple, and then for the I. of W. on Monday week, and then to look forward to seeing you, you darling. Well, you are such a great person now that I hardly dare write. Many belated congratulations on getting in the Hockey Team. Try and get into the Cricket Eleven too and then you will be an awful dog. I shall really come and see you next term on my new motor bike, which I have got no money to pay for, but I am going to buy. I am going to write to Margaret to get her to arrange some hockey matches at Seaview.'

Ronald wrote of the visit to Eastbourne College in his account of 1910: 'It was a most beautiful Easter week-end, and it was nice seeing a new School.'

On Easter Monday Ronald 'went to Broadstairs on a small Reading Party with William Temple—a Queen's party, splendid people. We worked quite hard, and, in the afternoon, constructed enormous walls of sand to keep back the sea, which the children much enjoyed.'

Mr. Temple writes:—'We had been there for a week when he came, and it had been a very jolly time; but his

arrival made everything different. We immediately had to buy enormous garden-shovels, and spent the afternoon barricading the sea out from a tiny bay by making an immense sandbank right across it. This might in itself amuse me for one day or be tolerable for two. Ronnie's amazing spirits kept us at it with infinite zest for a whole week.'

Ronald's account continues:—'After the Sunday, when I heard William Temple preach one of his best sermons, I went across to the Isle of Wight.'

To Keith Rae.

'April 5. St. Helens.

'Dear Keith-face,

'I hope you will be able to look in upon us on your way to Oxford. Evelyn Cardew turns up I hope on Friday, and Billy Collier the next Thursday. So please yourself and choose your date. But come as early as you can. No day will be too early (pretty!!) But we have no chocolate cake. However, with what eagerness will we approach the same in your rooms next term. If you are dropping some things anywhere, don't bother to bring dress clothes—just one suit and then flannels, &c., grayers no collar, golf knickers and shorts.

'Well, how goes it? You can bring a book or two to study if you like as you will have lots of time. You shall take us sailing and show us how it is done. I have been working 8 hours a day (liar)—well, about $7\frac{1}{2}$ —for 3 weeks, and am feeling haloish.

'Well, farewell. Let me have a note in that familiar, but appalling script.

'Yours ever,

'RONALD.

'I have lost your address so to Balliol it goes.'

In the Summer Term Ronald 'chucked cricket and got fat and played occasional games of tennis. I worked pretty hard at Hydraulics and turbine and steam nozzle experiments. About the middle of term I went with Mother to Mortimer and acted as Godfather to Denys Gardiner. It was a nice little holiday, but these shows come rather expensive in the silver mug department.'

To Janet.

'Listening to a rotten lecture.

'9. 15 a.m. Monday June 7th.

'You will say when you see this, what can have happened because

'1. Ronald is actually writing to me.

'2. What a curious piece of paper.

'3. Why isn't he doing his usual hard work.

'1. I meant to write to you in a day or so.

'2. This is a piece of foolscap and I have no other piece ; and I don't like to ask—for a bit. He might not like it.

'3. I usually work very hard of course, but this man is more boring than any one I ever heard. He talks absolute bosh. He is telling us with great gravity the work I learnt my first term at Rugby.

'How goes the world with you? We had a topping dance on Thursday night at the Taphouse's room. I had about four $a+$ and a good many $a-$ dances.

'I am going to be here all the week, working hard, and playing tennis in the evening, and then I shall go away for week-ends. I am coming to you on the first Thursday in July. I can take you out to tea, can't I? Then I am going to Rugby for one week-end and also probably to Marlston. Then I am going into the tennis tournament here. I am playing in the mixed with May.

'To-morrow I am going to lunch with Hilda and then to the Roosevelt lecture. It ought to be rather amusing.

'Term ends Saturday week, and then we go to Camp for about 10 days.

'You will have a lovely time in Brussels. I should love to go with you.

'There goes 10 o'clock and I have to go to another lecture. I will finish this there probably or somewhere about.

'The next lecture was so important that I am finishing this now just before playing tennis. To-night I and one other man and the Professor are going into the "Broad" to find the candle-power and illumination of the arc lamps in the road. It ought to be very amusing. There will probably be lots of people messing around looking on. Now Jane I must stop.'

In the Long Vacation Ronald 'stayed up in Oxford all

July for an Engineering Summer Term extension, doing laboratory work and helping in a bit of research on the reaction and velocity of flow of steam at different external and internal pressures, through differently shaped nozzles. Some good results were obtained'. The work was not altogether unrelieved by change and recreation, if we may judge from the following letter to Janet:—

'July 2nd. Wykeham House, Oxford.

'The night is quiet. I am in the schoolroom. Mother is drinking coffee in the drawing-room. Father is dining in Jesus with the Entomological Boys, and I have a full stomach, and am drawn to write to you. Why is this curious feeling of desire to write to that curious specimen who disports herself at High Wycombe? Partly because I hear that she is afraid I am not coming to High Wycombe on Thursday and partly because I believe she would like a letter from the skinny-nosed individual whose pink face is bent over this damask sheet. To set her mind at rest, I have every intention of coming to see you on Thursday on my Express Locomotive (3½ H. P.) If wet, I shall train. I hear that May and Marjorie and Willie are coming also. Then I say let us have tea together or lunch or something and have a jolly party. I *am* looking forward to it. I shall be so shy??

'I got back from Camp [Aldershot] yesterday and am still feeling pretty weary. We hadn't enough sleep, and I went to sleep there at all sorts of odd times.'

Then a little later, on July 14th, he wrote from Marlston congratulating Janet on being a member of all the three school teams—Hockey, Lacrosse, and Cricket:—

'Many congratulations on the triple brooch. It is splendid. I feel so honoured. All Oxford knows about it; Mother told several people and they all said that they had heard it through Elsie or Doris or some one.

'Mother and Father started yesterday at 2.30 from Oxford [in the dogcart] and got here at 7. I started [on motor-cycle] at a quarter to five and got here at a quarter to six. Some difference in speed, isn't it?

'The cream and raspberries are all right.

'No more now,

'Your loving

'RONALD.

'(Brother of Janet.)'

To Keith Rae.

'You may see a bedraggled object creeping down that narrow lane to your house in the evening [of July 29]. I am afraid I shall have to leave on the 5th in order to get to the Mission Camp at Romney. I will bring books to Rhoscolyn. I should have to do a little work.

'With love,

'Your friend,

'RONALD.'

The 'bedraggled object' did not reach Anglesey on the 29th, but wrote instead from Shrewsbury:—

'It is the eternal floater! I am so sorry. I left Oxford at 6.0 this morning: arrived at a point 6 miles from Stow-in-the-Wold at 8.30. There I broke down: it would misfire. I had to walk it to Stow: there I had breakfast at 10.30 and messed about with it till 1.0; then I trained to Worcester. There I thought I had mended it. But it was as bad as ever on the way to Kidderminster which I reached at my last gasp. There I went to a splendid garage who put it straight immediately. The platinum points on the magneto were worn, so I had to buy new ones. Then I fizzed over here and am putting up at this small pub. It is now 8.0 and I have had no food since breakfast. Tomorrow I shall be with you about 3.30. It is going top-hole now. I am sick at being so late. I am very tired but quite well.

'Best love,

'RONALD.'

A little later in the Long Vacation Charlie Symonds, Dick Dugdale, and Ronald joined us at St. Helens. Ronald wrote of the journey by motor-bicycle:—

'It is interesting to recall that we left Oxford about an hour before Dick's train, and got to the pier for crossing an hour and 20 minutes before he arrived! We stayed in the island about 3 weeks, and it was a good time. We read about 7 hours a day.

'On Sept. 12th I had a 21st birthday. We had a splendid picnic on Shanklin Down. The sea and cliffs looked *all right*. The presents were too numerous and costly to mention. About Sept. 17th Janet and I left for Marlston,

Janet by train, I by bike; and though it rained hard, and I broke a belt, and lost my way, and crossed in the same boat with her, yet however, and marvellous to relate, I met her as she reached the platform of Hermitage Station. It's marvellous but "ye can't do it yer know!"

To Keith Rae.

'Sept. 15th.

'Marlston House.

'Thank you tremendously for the wire and letter. And will you give jolly old Reiss my love, a kiss, a kick, and my thanks for his participation in your wire.

'Aren't you looking forward to the digs.? By Jove I am, but as for the work, good gracious I shall put knowledge into my waste paper basket of a head at the rate of 8 hours a day.

'Came up here yesterday on the old machine, and am off to manœuvres as Motor Cycle orderly on Saturday for a week. I have still 7 letters to write and have written 6, so excuse this palsied script.

'Much love, old thing, and kind regards to your people.

'Your affect. friend,

'RONALD.'

Written from Oxford on October 9th after Ronald had received *Orthodoxy* as a birthday present from Keith:—

'ME DEAR OLD MANNE,

'Thank you more than a little for the book. You will not believe me when I tell you a curious story. I have had a lot of books as presents, and as they are in the schoolroom, where I work at present, in a cabinet next to my brother's books, 3 or 4 days ago I was comparing them. I found I had a better lot than his, but there were one or two I wanted. One was "Orthodoxy". I said to myself I will read it anyhow, and took it out to read it. The next morning came your letter. Talk about Telepathy—(but we won't argue about it!) So it's splendid; thank you again so much. It will be a nice little thing to remember you by when I am slaving in a factory, and you are getting wretched men sent to penal S. for millions of years.

'Saw Billy yesterday looking fit. No more. I am up

to my eyes in correspondence and work. Hence this measly scrawl.

‘Much love,

‘Yours ∞ which means

‘yours to the power of infinity

‘or yours \times yours an infinite number of times.’

William Temple writes:—

‘In September 1910 I began my work at Repton. I was on the way to Australia when I was appointed, and got back a few days late for my first term. My mother was anxious to get the books into shelves as soon as possible and asked Ronnie to help her with them. Accordingly he arrived—after the boys got back but before I did. One day, Jack Smyth, of the Priory¹, who had been a Dragon with Ronnie—(Now Lieut. J. G. Smyth, V. C., and the hero of many legends)—ran into Mr. Vassall’s study and said in great excitement “Ronnie Poulton has just ridden down the school-yard on a motor-bike”. I have always believed that the immense cordiality of my reception two days later was partly due to the proof of my friendship with so popular a hero given by his presence at that time.’

Ronald headed the account of 1911:—

‘The year of the Coronation of King George V.

‘This year has been as eventful as any up to the present for me. In it, I have finished my “Schools”, thus probably passing through my last competitive examination, and have also completed my career at Oxford. I am not going to become sentimental over my life at Oxford, but leaving that to the imagination, merely point out that I am now at a further point in my journey where I have to try to put to some use the knowledge and experience gained at School and College.

‘The new year found me staying with Dick Dugdale at Whitchurch, and working hard for schools. Indeed, the history of my activities up to June may be condensed into the phrase, “working for Schools”. I spent some time in the laboratory and lecture room doing alternating current theory and later the theory of structures with regard to

¹ One of the Houses at Repton. It still contains some of the Norman pillars of the old Priory from which it is named.



KEITH RAE

BILLY COLLIER BINO RAE RONALD



BINO KEITH RONALD BILLY

THE THAMES BACKWATERS BETWEEN OSNEY AND WYTHAM, OXFORD.
From photographs by Edward Rae in the Summer Term of 1911.

bridge-building. I revised hard, and succeeded by June, in having got most of the subject fairly clear. But mathematics was my stumbling block.'

The following memories of Ronald at this period of his Oxford life were recalled by his friend Dick Dugdale, not many months before he was killed :—

'13th Wing, R.F.C., B.E.F., Febr. 1, 1918.

'Perhaps it was rather rash of me to say I could tell you a "good deal" about Ronald's working for his Finals, but nowadays details are not as distinct as they used to be. The particular period I was thinking of was the time when he was digging with Reiss, Keith Rae, Cardew, and Billy Collier in Oriel Street. He himself had chosen the smallest little back room for working in, you remember. It had a window looking up Bear Lane or at any rate in that direction.

'I remember once discussing cricket with him, and asking him why he had given it up: and he said because it took so much time: tennis was not so exacting—and his work was to come first. Somehow or other I connect with that discussion his telling me a saying of yours that a man wasn't really going to be good at his job until it came first in his thoughts always: until he could think out problems connected with it in his mind as he went about, as he dressed or had his bath, &c. . . . Ronald, I remember, admitted rather mournfully that Engineering didn't affect him like that—other things were so interesting: but that he saw that what you said was perfectly true—and I think he made great efforts while working for his Finals to get into that frame of mind.

'Often I used to go into his little room and suggest doing something or other (I had finished Mods. and Greats had only just begun: so that is my weak excuse for it!), and he would probably send me away: or come out for a brief ten minutes. Often too, as I passed, I would see him in the window sweating away at some work, and we would pass the time of day. Generally my efforts to get him out were unavailing. Then there was that visit to St. Helens, when Ronald and I worked in that sitting room over the stables. I think 7 hours a day was what we set ourselves: but we often "cheated" about it: we used to sit and work for some time and then find we had started some engrossing subject of conversation—and we had to

begin all over again. Though on the whole we got through a goodish amount of work. Looking back now I should say that he worked for his Finals from the same point of view as most people do. Theoretically he knew they ought to come first and a strong sense of what is really important and what isn't kept him at it. On the other hand he knew that other things were much more interesting and the long hours of work were really a trial to the flesh. Very few work really hard for Exams. at Oxford because they haven't learnt what hard work is : but many try to work really hard because they know they ought, and Ronald was one of those many. I know that what often kept him at it was the ideal of hard work that he saw in your life. The conversation used often to go back to that, and we used even to plot how best to stop you working so hard because Ronald thought it bad for you. But it was the ideal you set which kept him to it. He had far more to stop him working at Oxford than 75% of the men there have and yet he maintained a pretty high level of work up to his Finals all the time.

'These probably are not the sort of details you want at all : but, as I say, details have for me gone into a rather hazy background : only the salient facts remain—with Ronald in the middle of them as full of life and personality as ever.'

It is very touching to read these words and to know what I never knew in Ronald's life. I certainly never said anything to him with the intention of spurring him on ; he needed no exhortation and he received none from me. Anything I may have said referred to original work and not to preparation for examinations.

Among the few relaxations Ronald allowed himself was the *Winter's Tale* acted by the O.U.D.S., where 'Hilda as Hermione was the chiefest joy of all'.

'In the Isle of Wight we had some excellent games of hockey. For the last week of the vacation I went North and met C. P. Evers, R. W. Evers, and Roby M. Gotch at Hexham, and started for a short walking-tour over the Northumberland hills. It was a splendid week. There was some rain, but the views were excellent, and most of the villages, notably Alwinton, Otterburn, and Harbottle,



HILDA AS HERMIONE.

From a photograph by Hills & Saunders of Oxford.

most fascinating. We played a continuous game of Bridge each night, and spent the last night at Alnmouth on the Northumberland coast.

‘During the Summer Term I was hard at it. Among the relaxations were—a splendid dance at the beginning of the Term, a beautiful row up the river for breakfast on May morning, occasional games of cricket, and refereeing at cricket matches of the Balliol Boys’ Club. Just before Schools I spent a week-end at Rugby and played in the Old Rugbeians Cricket Match, which was a bold experiment, as I had not touched a bat for a year.’

Ronald did not find the Schools in June so terrible as he imagined. It is also pleasant to know that the strain was by no means unrelieved.

‘The mathematical papers were too much for me, but I found I knew a good deal about the other subjects. The second I obtained was really what I expected. In the middle of the examination Janet and I went to watch the Coronation. We had a fine view from a stand in Parliament Square. The day after the last paper we went to the Balliol Ball which was voted by all present as a great success, and seemed to me to compare favourably with the other balls of that Commemoration.’

Professor C. F. Jenkin wrote to me on June 30 ; I well remember the pleasure given to my brother-in-law by the letter :—

‘None of my men this year get firsts. Ronald is at the top of the list of the Second Class. He has done his final papers very well. He only worked for me two terms really hard, and has done extraordinarily well in that time. I have urged him from time to time to work harder, but he has had so many other occupations that till the last two terms he was not able to do so.

‘As he does not need to hunt for a job and does not need the special prestige of a First, I cannot think that he really lost anything but rather that he has gained by all the other excellent work which he has interested himself in.

‘I have never met a young man I would more gladly recommend for any post of responsibility. It has been a great pleasure having him in my class.’

Ronald's Science Tutor, Harold Hartley, wrote on July 10:—

'Many thanks for sending me Jenkin's letter about Ronald. I knew he had improved a lot in his last terms, but I hardly expected him to go better than a "Second", as his time had been so much broken into in various ways. But I would not have had him alter anything. He has added a great deal to the life of the College and we shall be very sorry to lose him in December. Classes are after all only a small incident in a career. As Conroy said to me "Their chief merit is that they *justify a job*". There is no need for that in Ronald's case so we need not worry.'

Mr. Hartley also wrote to Ronald on July 8:—

'The College accepted my plan for your work next Term. I am very sorry it is to be your last; we shall miss you in College and I shall always be glad to remember that I had a hand in bringing you to Balliol.'

Except for the football, treated elsewhere, Ronald's last term requires few words. He took his degree on Oct. 12, and was in lodgings in Long Wall with his friends Dick Dugdale and M. T. Collis. The rooms were uncomfortable 'and but for the companionship of my partners would have been unbearable. I spent a certain time in the Pitt-Rivers preparing a paper on the I. of Wight palaeoliths. I also prepared a paper on an Engineering subject to read before the Physical Section of the N.H.S. at Rugby, but captaining the team took most time.'

After the Schools and Aldershot Ronald 'went with a party of Balliol friends, about seven in all, for four days canoeing on the Wye. The weather was perfect, and this with the excitement of rushing the rapids combined to make the trip a great success. The views were wonderful and the hospitality of the farmers remarkable.'

The Rev. Neville Gorton retains vivid memories of the expedition:—

'It was a great time and I know the success was entirely due to Ronald. Keith, Stephen, Ronald, Wertheimer,¹

¹ W. T. Collier was also one of the party.

and I had all just taken Finals. Three of us had had a sort of nervous break-down before or after and were naturally as nervy and moody as we could be, and Ronald kept us all going. I remember a desperate quarrel between three of the party—it was only that they were on edge from being tired out—over some absurd handling of the boat off Goodrich, and Ronald's splendid healing influence as usual.'

Lieut. F. Joseph Conway (Wertheimer), R. F. A., writing from Bombay, July 27, 1917, and finding it 'difficult now to recall particular incidents of Oxford days, which seem immeasurably far away', has special memories of Ronald on that camping expedition. After referring to the effects of the examinations and the influence of Ronald's personality, 'which might be described as magnetic; he never allowed you to be annoyed with the world for long', Lieut. Conway continues:—

'The deeper side of his nature could be felt under the cheerful, fascinating surface, but he never consciously obtruded his real personality. His moral earnestness was a factor for good and not for self-gratification: hence he was anything but a prig. He was an influence.

'It seems to me that by their death men like Ronald have illuminated very brightly the dark days in which we live.'

A day or two after the expedition Ronald carried out a plan proposed by his uncle and 'departed for a longish stay in France with Madame de Montarby and her charming daughter Marie Louise, at her small house near Blois, in Touraine. There were two other English fellows there, but I was honoured by being taught by the dark-eyed Marie Louise. The heat was very great—about 95° for five weeks. We never left the house till after tea, and usually got in about 3 bathes in the River Beuvron which flows beneath the garden wall. We worked in the morning, read in the afternoon, played stump cricket in the evening, and played spoof and demon patience after dinner. On occasional cool days we visited the Châteaux. Among others we saw Chenonceaux, Villandry, Blois, Cour-Cheverny, and Amboise. We met some of the aristocratic families of France who seemed united in the endeavour to turn the Government out of the country but

on no account to do any good to themselves or any one else'.

The visit to France in 1911 was the beginning of a love for the country and its people which deepened in Ronald's mind each time he went there. Next to his own country France stood alone in his affection—there was no third—and the words written beneath his portrait at La Caillère are just what he would have wished them to be:—

'Mort pour sa patrie et pour la nôtre, 5 mai 1915.'

To his brother.

'La Caillère.

'This is a very jolly farm-house here, right in the country, about 30 miles from Tours and 40 from Orleans. It is about 2 miles from the Loire. All round are Châteaux great and small. All the small are inhabited by Counts, &c., and the big by Marquises or Princesses, or else uninhabited. It appears to be nothing to be a Count here. Even 500 peers in England won't make peers so common in England as they are here. I haven't seen any of the show Châteaux yet, because they are a good way off, and it is very hot, but I have been to several of the smaller ones. We went to one the other day. It is quite a big house with a beautiful park, and a tennis court. The tennis court was of sand with the oldest net I have ever seen. It broke twice during one of our games. The French are very annoying when playing tennis; they will treat it as an interlude to conversation. They often talk during the rallies, when there are any, which was seldom as they were very bad. You can imagine how this annoyed us, who take our games rather seriously as a nation.'

To his father.

'All the papers out here are full of war scares. I do hope it doesn't mean anything. But they are very much afraid here, because on September 20 the 2nd year men in the army go home, and they will have to be kept to the Colours. Much love, Darling

To Keith Rae.

'Aug. 28.

'MY DEAR KEITH,

'I have a good mind to write to you in French, but of course you wouldn't understand it, you're such an exceed-

ingly illiterate fellow, and am I not the Professor des Beaux Arts de Rhoscolyn? By Jove I wish I was with you now. You can imagine I am a bit dull here.

'First of all I see it was a *second*. I am very sorry, but I suppose it was not exactly a disappointment to you as you expected it. But still it is a nasty feeling to have when with given luck in health and such things you could have pulled off a first easily. Poor Gortey, I haven't dared to write to him yet, but shall soon. And also poor Stephen. But I suppose he wouldn't be so disappointed as Gortey. I am so glad that Werters pulled it off.

'When you write please tell me about the digs you and Billy have got. I am more than interested. Dick and I have already asked more people for week-ends than there are week-ends, which is a bit awkward. He and I are going a short tour for a week on our infernal machines round Nantes, Tours, Blois, Chartres, Caen, Bayeux, Avranches, Mont St. Michel, at the end of September, and then I come home the 30th and Teddie is married the 3rd of Oct.

'Well, now a little about my life here. This is a jolly farm-house, quite small and simple. The garden is quite nice, but of course completely burnt up. Madame here is quite delightful and quite amusing. We work every morning, and then we read in the afternoon and take some form of violent exercise after tea and bathe before dinner and when we get up. It is a quiet monotonous life, and we get a bit tired of it. But about a fortnight ago I went home for a week to see my people and to have a week-end with my Uncle, and also to have 3 days with the boys of the Rugby Club at Romney. It was all right, I can tell you. We had 125 boys there and 95 the day before. I am here now till the 20th of Sept. before I go off on the tour.

'The other day I was in the garden waiting for dinner when I heard a carriage pass in the road outside. It was pretty dark, but I thought I heard a voice saying, "There's Ronnie Poulton". I ran out, and there was Bulkeley,¹ and a fellow called Campbell who is at Magdalen, and crowds more I didn't know. They had been to see a château near here and were returning. It was a funny coincidence, since we neither knew the other was out here. On the Saturday I biked over to the château where they are living.

'I had a long talk with Bulkeley about the Anna [the

¹ Capt. V. F. Bulkeley-Johnson, Rifle Bde.

Annandale Society at Balliol]. He was very sensible, and would do anything to turn it into a reasonable club, even to the extent of abolishing the table; but he says that — and —, though much more reasonable people than they used to be, would oppose it, and they had a strong following. But he is very keen not to allow freshers in the Club, and is going to pill any put up next term. He was very sympathetic and really quite jolly.

‘Well, good-bye, old boy. Write a nice letter about your doings and about the digs and about the Viva, and about the river trip. Love,

‘Yours affectionately,

‘RONALD.’

The Annandale Society was started in Balliol about 1890, as a rival to the ‘Dervorguilla’, by M. W. Mortimer, who annexed for it the very attractive colours, black, grey, and white, of an extinct society, the ‘Bat Club’, so called because its members were given to nocturnal flittings, and because they were *not* cricketers. The original Annandale is remembered as a society with a serious purpose, a living protest against the frivolity of the age, a meeting-place chiefly for Scotchmen who debated Carlyle and other weighty writers. Presently, captured in a humorous spirit by a set with very different ideals, it became transfigured, and finally led in Ronald’s time to a serious feud.

Capt. H. R. Bowlby, 8th Rifle Brigade, himself in favour of a peaceful solution, has recalled memories of the struggle:—

‘There may be said to have been two groups in the anti-Anna section of the college:

(a) The extremists of whom Keith Rae was the leading figure.

(b) Those who also profoundly disapproved of the Club as being contrary to the spirit of Balliol, but were willing to use the most tactful and peaceable methods in order to bring about a conclusion satisfactory to the College as a whole.

‘The one standing visible grievance to all of us was the “Anna” table.¹ We felt it to be contrary to all that

¹ Originally a ‘Dervor’ institution, captured for the ‘Anna’ by an inner ring of members belonging to both societies.

Balliol stands for—a united and friendly society of men from every class as well as from all parts of the Empire. There is no doubt—and I know Ronald felt this—that the table made a bad impression.

‘The second grievance was the all too frequent disturbance of College peace on Saturday nights. The climax was reached when a leading member of the “Anna” rudely interrupted the meeting in Balliol of a distinguished University literary society—the Shaftesbury—at which members of other Colleges were present. It was then felt that serious measures must be taken. A formal meeting was held in the Garden Quad on the following day, at which Ronald, as the best known member of the College as well as being intensely liberal minded, and Rae, as a senior undergraduate and perhaps best known for his rigid and consistent attitude, saw the intruder and threatened serious measures if an apology was not forthcoming. As matters then stood it is my honest conviction that conciliatory methods were out of the question. Thanks to these two an apology was given, and a serious “row”—few know how intense the feeling was or how complete the preparations—was avoided. I have no doubt that this was due in a very great measure to the respect in which Ronald was held by every one and to the strength and tact which lay behind his dealings with others.

‘Although he was not at Oxford when the final events brought about the doing away with the table, his support was of great service to the opposition, and being the man he was I believe he made certain members of the “Anna” realize that there was something in the arguments put forward by the opposing faction. Those who knew Ronald and Evelyn Cardew must realize that they would not have refused to join the Club had they not had well-thought-out reasons for declining.

‘Ronald’s connection with this episode is I think all the more significant because he was loved and respected by members of the Club. It was—as for all of us—his indignation at any slur being cast on the good name of Balliol that led him to take a leading part in the suppression of those who showed lack of courtesy and consideration to fellow members of the College, as well as—on the occasion mentioned above—to guests of the College.’

C. P. Evers writes: ‘Ronald used to tell me a good deal about difficulties at Balliol, especially in connection with the rowdy set of “bloods”, who seem to have made them-

selves particularly objectionable in his time. Most of the leading men in Ronald's particular circle refused to know them or have anything to do with them. But Ronald himself was on good terms with many of them, and he was a good deal exercised in his mind towards the end of his Oxford days as to whether his friends had adopted the right course. He was inclined to believe—though I think his friends did not agree—that it would have been more helpful if they had been willing to know the "bloods" and had tried by personal influence and example to bring about a better state of things in College. As it was, they cut themselves completely aloof, showing that they despised the "bloods", but this did not really help matters. This was Ronald's own view, and he expressed it to me during (I think) his third summer, when I spent a night at Wykeham House during Eights' Week. While some of the party were at a concert I walked down to Ronald's rooms in Oriel Street and he and I and Dick Dugdale discussed the question for a long time. As it happened, during the discussion one of the particular "bloods" in question burst into the room after a Bullingdon dinner, together with a visitor—a young Guardsman, I fancy. Both—especially the latter—were the worse for drink. That was one of the few times I saw Ronald really angry. He put them both out of the room in the most unceremonious fashion. The "blood" returned a little later, rather sobered, and apologized for what had happened. Ronald was not easily appeased, but the man was in a way contrite, and was finally forgiven. But I think the interview confirmed Ronald in his opinion that it would have been better to recognize the existence of the "blood" element and to try and win it away from its worst characteristics.'

The explanation of the 'Anna' as a disintegrating force is to be sought in an intolerant and aggressive spirit too often found among men from a single school, and evident, I have been informed, upon the banks of the Cam no less than upon the Isis.

It will be clear to any reader of this volume that no one could have loved his school more devotedly than Ronald loved Rugby. His letter to his mother on leaving school would by itself be sufficient to prove this. But his intense loyalty and devotion to Rugby did not mean that he was

the less, but all the more, able to enter freely and sympathetically into the varied life of the University, and to cooperate in the most friendly spirit with men from every other school or from no school at all. A false strain has crept into the loyalty of some men from a great and ancient and noble foundation. Let us hope that in the future those who are responsible will see to it that Eton men are not handicapped in playing their part in a world which is never likely to be composed wholly of Eton men. In the end the world will always cure those of them who are worth curing, and they will play, as they have ever done, a splendid part in it; but after what unnecessary friction and delay, and the loss of so much that University life could give them, and with how much loss to others.

‘All Keith’s last year’, writes his friend Neville Gorton, ‘the “Anna” was a kind of nightmare to him. For months he had the whole thing on his brain. He was extraordinarily bitter. He felt that before he went down he ought to smash it. It was a serious disintegrating influence right through the College. One can’t exaggerate the harm it did, and the last two years I was up the whole College was divided in the most bitter feud. Personally I used to get frightfully worked up at times and then, as Secretary for the Christian Union set in College, to doubt the wisdom or rightness of Keith’s methods and waver round to other methods, though I honestly think now Keith’s was the only way out.’

Although the feud between the leaders on the two sides was so bitter, a beautiful and touching end was brought to it by the stress and strain of the war. Even when things were at their worst Keith Rae had clearly recognized great and splendid qualities in the leader of the opposite party. ‘If I were in a shipwreck or any danger of that kind I would rather be with him than any one else’, he once said to the present Master of Balliol. But the protest and forced apology were regarded as a lasting grievance, and nothing more than a formal reconciliation—and this much later—was possible at Oxford. Then came the war, and the two opponents met as officers in the same battalion.

Capt. Bowlby, who was with them, wrote of Keith to the Editor of the *Balliol Club Magazine*: 'Those of us who knew and loved him need not be told what a wonderful officer and friend he proved himself to be "out there"'. And so in those few short months these qualities became also revealed to one who had never really known him, and his old opponent sought Keith for a true reconciliation and friendship. And when the end came with the first use of liquid fire in the attack at Hooge, Keith and his sergeant were last seen, unyielding and alone, defending an abandoned trench, while his new-found friend was killed, with many another of our best and bravest, in the first ill-planned and useless counter-attack.

Ronald was not one of those who take naturally to the life of a soldier. When the question of his joining the School Volunteers arose he wrote saying that he would be rather pleased if we did not wish him to enter the R.S.R.V.C. But the Officers' Training Corps had come into existence on Sept. 1, 1908, as the result of the inspiring meeting in the Town Hall addressed by Lord Haldane in the previous May, and Ronald, when he came up, was convinced that it was his duty to join. He was extremely interested in the great questions of military strategy and tactics. Members of the family will always remember the long evening hours he used to spend in the drawing-room at St. Helens, reading *The Times History of the War in South Africa*; and his friends noticed the same keenness. Thus Captain L. R. Broster wrote:—

'I was surprised to find how keenly interested Ronald was in Military strategy. For the want of something to do I read Ian Hamilton's *Russo-Japanese War* and *With Kitchener to Khartoum*, and found that he had studied them long before.'

I remember too how much he appreciated *The Defence of Duffer's Drift*, by 'Backsight Forethought', of which he gave me a copy. One of Ronald's friends greatly admired

J. A. Cramb's book on England and Germany, and I was much interested to know what Ronald himself would think of it. I found, as I expected, that he agreed with me in disliking the eloquent glorification of war which is its main thesis. After four years of the real thing even the military chiefs of Germany, if they spoke their inmost thoughts, would probably express only a chastened approval of the views of their English apologist.

A brief statement of some experiences in the O.T.C. is given in Ronald's accounts of the years.

He speaks of taking part on May 5, 1909, in 'the review of the O.T.C. at Headington and shortly after in a Field day at Claydon'. On June 19 he went with the O.T.C. to Aldershot for a very enjoyable though very wet week. Then in September,—

'went for the day round the manœuvres at Faringdon, with Gerald Fisher on the carrier of my motor-cycle. He expressed great knowledge of where the fighting would be, but ultimately we motored 40 miles without seeing a soldier. On Nov. 22nd I was examined for certificate "A" O.T.C., and I hope I passed.¹ I certainly got through the practical at Cowley Barracks.'

1910. 'About May 16th I was picked as a representative of C Company to march in the procession through London at the King's funeral. We stayed the night on the floor of a Territorial Drill Hall. The standing in St. James's Street and the marching with strapped overcoats to Paddington was the most tiring thing I ever did.

'At the end of Term I spent the usual splendid and damp week at Aldershot, where owing to shortage I was forced to act as Colour-Sergeant of our Company, with the advantage of not having to carry a rifle on parade.'

He wrote to his friend C. P. Evers on July 18: 'I had a gorgeous time at Aldershot and really am frightfully keen on soldiering.' As a result of the Aldershot week Ronald and his friend Dick Dugdale (of C.C.C.) were invited to take part as Motor-cycle Dispatch Riders in the Autumn Manœuvres. Ronald's brief note was contained in the

¹ He passed successfully.

missing pages of his account of 1910, but I remember his telling us of his capture and how it was cleverly effected by converting a pony carriage full of ladies into a barrier which brought the motor-cycle to a sudden stop. Before he could turn and escape, the enemy appeared at close quarters behind him and he had to surrender.

After the manœuvres were over Ronald received the following letter from H.Q. of the Southern Command at Salisbury:—

‘DEAR POULTON,

‘Lt-General Sir Charles Douglas wishes me to write and thank you very much for the very efficient way in which you carried out your duties as a despatch rider during the recent manœuvres. He thinks it was most patriotic of you to give him your services at great expense and discomfort to yourself.

‘Yours sincerely,

‘R. S. MAY.’

In the Autumn Term of 1910 Ronald was elected President of the O.T.C. Sergeants’ Mess (*Varsity*, Nov. 17, 1910, p. 65).

After the Final Schools in June 1911, ‘the next week was spent at Aldershot, where we had an excellent week’s training, interrupted by a visit to Windsor for the review of the O.T.C.’s by the King. This review of 22,000 possible officers in any branch of the army of England was quite a moving spectacle, only marred by the thought of how few of those 22,000 will ever be fitted really to command. But the importance of the whole scheme is shewn by the fact that during the recent crisis, there were not enough officers in England to fill up places vacant from the primary wastage of war.’

Capt. N. Whatley has kindly sent me the record of Ronald’s Service in the Officers’ Training Corps:—

Cadet Colour-Sergeant R. W. Poulton,
Balliol Section, C Company,
Joined, Oxford Univ. O.T.C. 4. 12. 08.
Resigned ” ” ” 29. 12. 11
with above rank.

Passed Examination 'A' and obtained the
Certificate Nov. 1909.
" " 'B' and obtained the
Certificate May 1910.

Ronald's record of Service and Qualifications of a Cadet on leaving the Infantry unit, Oxford University Contingent, dated Jan. 9, 1912, gives as his Qualifications—'General Efficiency, very good,' and, under Musketry, 'Fired Table "B".' The Special Remarks entered are 'Efficient, 1909, 10, 11'.

Among Ronald's papers are a set of his answers to questions on 'Appreciation of Situation'. The careful marginal and terminal notes by Capt. and Adj. R. Maclachlan—'just back from camp—fagged out!'—show that he found the answers satisfactory. Capt. Maclachlan's paper giving the results of the examination for Certificate B is endorsed, 'Well done. I know you cannot take a commission yet, but enclose a pamphlet!'

The Rev. Henry C. Wace (Maj. T.F.) has recalled memories of Ronald as one of a band of Balliol men who took an important part in the earliest days of the O.T.C. at Oxford.

'Your son was one of the most notable leaders in Undergraduate life who joined the Corps when it was reconstructed as an O.T.C. under Lord Haldane:—the whole success of the movement depended on the way in which it was backed up by men like your son. From the time he joined, the Balliol Section became the most efficient and vigorous section in C Company. Their position was on the right, and I well remember the extraordinary succession of big vigorous men the College provided at the head of the Company. They were big mentally as well as physically—most I think were Scholars. Names that occur to me are D. R. Brandt [Lt. Rifle Brigade, killed July 6, 1915], L. U. Kay-Shuttleworth [Lt. and Adj. R.A., killed Mar. 30, 1917], C. Fyson [Lt. Worc. Regt.], W. G. Fletcher [2nd Lt. R. Welsh Fusiliers, killed Mar. 20, 1915], V. F. Bulkeley-Johnson [Capt. Rifle Brigade]. In the first camp that your son came to—it must have been 1909—he was, I believe, in a tent at the end of one of the lines opening on to the centre street. He was with Brandt and Kay-Shuttle-

worth and another. I remember the tent well, and watching with some anxiety to see whether they approved of our methods of running the Company or not. It was the first year we had had men of that stamp, in any numbers, in the Corps, and one was very anxious as to how it struck them. I don't think I am doing them an injustice if I say that, as far as I remember, some of the small details of Camp life—such as keeping their buttons clean, &c.—rather bored that particular tent; but when it came to real work they would do anything, and they backed one up absolutely to the last. I never had a man who worked more loyally under me than your son; I cannot recall a single instance in which we were at loggerheads. Busy man as he was, he took an infinity of trouble over the Corps, and I believe that, despite his many engagements, he hardly missed a single field day during term time.'

Memories have also come to me from one who served in the O.T.C. with Ronald—J. Mostyn Silvester, Jesus College, A.D.C., resident when he wrote at Machakos, British East Africa:—

'Your son was of course a good deal senior to me at Oxford, but he was Colour-Sergeant of our Company in the O.T.C., and never shall I forget the constant consideration and kindness which he showed to all of us, whether we were from Balliol, B.N.C., or Jesus [the three Colleges combined in C Company]. We would always far rather do anything for him than for our officers. I only knew him in just that little corner of life in camp, but there he won my admiration and respect. As Colour-Sergeant he was the senior Non-Commissioned Officer, and commands, orders, &c. passed down through him to us, while all requests for leave, &c. went up to the C.O. through him. I remember very often in those dreary marches over Long Valley and Laffan's Plain, when returning to camp, how he would buck us up with a few words or would start a song to get us along on the campward road.

'The next year he had gone down and another man occupied his place. Somehow things were often wrong that year, and again and again one heard, "If only old Poulton were here it would be all right". I think that will show you in what respect and affection he was held.'

It was from his experiences in the O.T.C. and the re-

sulting association with professional soldiers that Ronald came to realize, before he left Oxford, that war with Germany was inevitable. Thus the Rev. C. S. Donald writes :—

‘ I once stayed with Ronnie at Oxford, a short and jolly visit. I well remember being introduced by him on the Oxford platform as I left to a Staff Officer. As the train was coming in I remember Ronnie saying, “ He’s a splendid fellow. He is absolutely certain that the Germans mean war in a few years: it’s as certain as the sequence of night and day.” ’

And these are the words with which Ronald brought to an end the account of 1911, his last year at Oxford :—

‘ Before closing I must mention the fact which has made this year stand out in every Englishman’s mind. This fact is the appalling proximity to a European conflagration during July and August. At one time we were within 24 hours of war with Germany, and only by a certain amount of good fortune was it avoided. It is interesting to inquire what one would have been doing now, had that crisis not passed ; and it is important to consider what course one will pursue if any crisis of this kind is not surmounted in the future.’

VII

BOYS' CLUBS IN OXFORD YEARS

There is nothing that is not fresh, happy, and beautiful in his memory. I can never think of any sorrow cloud passing over the sun in that wonderful life—except sorrow for the sufferings of others. It is a memory to cherish as one of one's dearest possessions.—2nd Lt. T. K. H. RAE, Rifle Bde., Balliol, from the Flanders front, July 9, 1915, three weeks before he was killed.

I so often think of those three great friends, Ronald, Keith Rae, and Stephen Reiss, and like to imagine them as in the old days working together elsewhere. How I miss them!—Capt. H. R. BOWLBY, Rifle Bde., Balliol.

EDWARD in his account of the year speaks of various meetings, held in Balliol during the Michaelmas Term of 1906, under the presidency of the present Master, to discuss social questions. As one result it was decided to start the Balliol Boys' Club in Oxford.

In Ronald's first term Stephen L. Reiss was President, Keith (T. K. H.) Rae Secretary, and Neville Gorton Treasurer. These and all the other officers of the Club during the whole of his Oxford days—H. R. Bowlby, W. T. Collier, G. M. Hamilton, and R. Wodehouse—were among his most intimate friends. Ronald was Secretary Oct. 1909 to June 1910.

On one occasion when an officer was absent Ronald took the notes but added, 'To Mr. Wodehouse, who is I believe Secretary of the Balliol Boys' Club', and 'I have done this for my dear friend, and I hope he finds it a clear and concise account of what happened. Signed R. W. Poulton (Ex-Secretary—that's how I learnt to do it).'

Keith Rae, the leader of the group of friends who

managed the Balliol Boys' Club, was a year senior to Ronald and a little older, having been born May 24, 1889. One of his brothers being too delicate to leave home, Keith stayed with him and was educated by a tutor, attending classes at the University of Liverpool. Unlike Ronald, he had had no experience of Boys' Clubs before he went to Oxford. It is interesting that one whose education had been so different from that of most English boys should have quickly taken a leading place among the Balliol men of his time. Ronald's letters show how much he looked up to Keith and how highly he valued his friendship. The leading part taken by Keith Rae is well shown in a paragraph from Ronald's letter of March 2, 1910, to C. P. Evers, of which nearly the whole has been quoted on pp. 66, 67:—

'We are making a great effort to fight against the immorality of the boys, whether Club boys or not. Rae, our President, in the weekly officers' meeting (boy officers) told them perfectly straight what he thought and knew about it, and in consequence we got their confidence and shall I believe be able to do much good.'

Ronald kept up his active association with the Club to the very end of his Oxford life, attending the Committee meeting on Jan. 21, 1912, a few days before he left for Reading.

It was during his Oxford residence that I learnt something of Ronald's work at the Club and in Camps. I remember his once telling us of a boy, who, having been turned out for making himself a nuisance, showed his defiance by spitting into the room through the keyhole. I wondered whether such a boy would ever be any good in the Club. 'Rather,' said Ronald; 'why, when you've once got hold of him he'll probably make the best of the lot'. The same spirit of humour and creative optimism appears in a letter to Janet written from home, Dec. 14, 1908, at the end of his first term:—

'Yesterday I went down to St. Ebbe's, where the Balliol Boys' Club is, and took the service and made them a little

sermon. I think it was rather successful, and they were fairly quiet,—that is to say they only whistled and talked and threw chairs about.'

So Ronald while still an undergraduate had found for himself the truth stated by Baden-Powell, 'that the worst hooligan soon makes the best Scout: he only needs direction for his adventurous energy and attractive pursuits to fill a void' (*Times*, Oct. 10, 1916). That there were several such boys in the Balliol Club may be gathered from a letter written by W. T. Collier to Keith Rae, just before the beginning of the Autumn Term of 1909:—

'The Club is open now every night. I rely on you to be here on Thursday, as I have told two or three boys to come and see you. I must confess I shall be rather glad when Term begins, as it is rather a sham in the vac. One or two of the boys are rather out of hand, notably —, whom Poulton chucked out last week, who has been behaving rather like the — and — type: he has been going off steadily the last 2 or 3 weeks, and —, who is *the limit*: I put him out last night, though he ought to have been out before.

'Poulton has brought down a new game—Puff-billiards—which has caught on tremendously. He has been up to the Rugby Mission in London and is full of schemes of reform. I must say I agree with him, if it would be possible to make them work smoothly. He suggests that the first part of the evening should be given up to learning something useful, i.e. carpentering, boot-mending, &c., and the second part to amusement, &c. Of course it would need considerable thought and money for this, but I am sure that we ought to start something in that way, which might be really useful to the boys.'

From his Mother.

'Ronald often talked to me about the boys, and some of them I knew, as they lived in my district. When he came home on Sundays he would talk to me about what he should say to them when he took the Sunday service. We often also discussed their future life, and their employments, and he and I used to argue the question as to whether we ought to keep a house-boy. I think, in

the end, he was convinced that the training we gave these boys did help them in their future careers. I loved all these talks; he always had such sensible and practical views.'

The generous share of the year allotted to vacations enabled Ronald to spend much time at the summer Camps, which were his special delight. In his first year, before he had settled down to serious work for his Final Schools, he not only worked hard for the Balliol Club, but at Easter 1909 visited the Bermondsey Club, while the Long Vacation Camps form a large part of his account of the year. On June 29, the day after Hilda's wedding, he started on his motor bicycle for Beaulieu in the New Forest and the Balliol Boys' Club Camp, of which he wrote: 'The weather was beautiful, and it was an interesting and instructive experience sleeping in the tents with the boys. One gets to know them much better that way.'

Lt. G. M. Hamilton (Graves Regn. Comn.) writes:—

'I fear I can remember little enough about it, except the pleasure it was to have him with us. Two things remain with me—his anger and disgust with a boy who was ill-treating a crab, and his intense enjoyment of an early morning walk through the New Forest which ended with a visit to the beautiful ruins of Beaulieu Abbey.'

Later on, there was New Romney and, as he wrote:—

'My fifth consecutive visit. I was there right through the fortnight except for one brief interlude. I even came in for the last day of the girls' week. This caused some embarrassment when I went down to Notting Hill later, to be welcomed at various turns by some unknown young ladies, and I had to reply appropriately.

'It was a splendid week and absolutely perfect throughout. The nights on the beach were lovely and called forth a song of which the chorus was:

You may like your feather bed
Where you cannot turn your head
To see the moonbeams silvering the sea;
You may talk of dell or dingle,
But a bed upon the shingle
Is the only bed worth sleeping in for me.

'I never feel so perfectly the delight of living as at 6.0 in the morning on the beach at New Romney, with the waves lapping at my feet, and the sun high up over Dover pier.'

In the middle of the stay Ronald motor-cycled north to act as groomsman at the wedding of his friends Miss Nancy Mann and Mr. Hawkesworth. He gave a graphic account of the return journey from Oxford to New Romney :—

'I left Oxford at 4.30 by Carfax clock. I passed Henley after tea, looking lovely, and passed through Twyford, Wokingham, Bagshot, Bisley, Guildford and Dorking. At Dorking I had some dinner, and as it was such a perfect night I determined to go on. I had to change the belt as the other was slipping, but otherwise all went well. I went through Redhill, East Grinstead, and finally reached Tunbridge Wells with great difficulty at 2.30 a.m. The difficulty was that I could not find my way. I found a policeman who directed me on. I got through Lamberhurst, but finally came to a stop at 3.30 at a big cross roads, because I hadn't any idea where I was, and my back tyre was punctured. I stuck up the bike and went to sleep for 2½ hours on a heap of stones. Among other excellent things that a motor bicycle does for you, it never fails to make you sleepy. The next morning I mended the puncture, and found my way through Rye to New Romney in time for breakfast. The motor bicycle was very popular, as I was able to give a lot of rides to boys along the sands.'

The following memories of Ronald at the New Romney Camps of 1909 and 1910 have been recalled by his Oxford friend, Capt. C. P. Symonds, R.A.M.C., whose engagement to Janet was such a pleasure to him during the months of training at Chelmsford :—

'I find it very difficult to put down on paper any definite impressions of Ronald as I knew him. I know that some of the happiest days I have ever had were spent in his company, while all the times were so jolly that I was too happy to think much or analyse my feelings, but was content to love him and enjoy it, as every one

NEW ROMNEY



RONALD ON THE BEACH WITH HIS BALLIOL FRIEND NORMAN F. SMITH.
From a photograph by A. L. N. Russell, 1909.



RONALD JUDGING IN A TUG-OF-WAR.
From a photograph by Rev. C. S. Donald, probably 1910.

else who knew him did love him ; so now I have to cast back and try and unravel why so much of the brightness and friendliness in the air were due to him.

‘He was certainly the most attractive of all men to meet for the first time. Although we were at Rugby together I never really had more than a nodding acquaintanceship with him until the Romney Camp of 1909. He and I were both included in a party of some half-dozen of the Staff who went down a day beforehand to prepare things : I had never been down there before, whereas he and the others were old hands, and I felt at first rather shy, but by the end of the journey down in the dirty S.E. carriage I knew I was going to enjoy my fortnight there. I well remember that when I got into that train I was filled with apprehension, and when I got out of it, I felt as if I’d known every one in the party for years and that they were all splendid people. And now as I look back on it, I believe it is a good instance of the atmosphere of friendliness that Ronald created wherever he went.

‘I was a new-comer, and a stranger in an intimate party, and quite naturally and unselfconsciously Ronald made me of it, and put me at my ease. Wherever he was he was radiant of good spirits and could make people “rag”, and in the most diverse companies could create in no time a spirit of good fellowship. Before that Camp was finished I came to know him as intimately as I think only Rommers (or war) can bring people together in so short a time. We used to sleep next one another on the shingle, and talk as we went to sleep—and here he introduced me to some of his ideas about Boys’ Clubs: they were then quite vague, but he obviously felt that Boys’ Clubs were one of the institutions worth living for.

‘He was always at Rommers, in those days, the Camp carpenter, and used to spend the mornings very happily repairing wrecked furniture—always with some one to help him. I believe he hated doing things alone, but as long as he had a congenial spirit with him, no task was dull : and he had a way of finding congenial spirits.

‘With the boys he was a great success ; to start with his natural athleticism appealed to them, and he was as unselfconscious and jolly with them as he was with others: he never pretended to understand them when he didn’t.

‘The best picture of him in my memory is of a blanket-wrapt figure on Romney beach early in the morning, and

a perfectly red unshaven face with an enormous grin of satisfaction at having shirked a cold bathe and scored another half-hour's sleep.

'And I remember turning him out of his nest in the shingle and the fight that ensued. He was a priceless friend.'

After a visit to New Romney in the autumn of 1915 Capt. Symonds wrote :—

'We enjoyed our bathe on the old beach at Rommers, though it made me feel very sad to look on all the old places and think of the men who were gone.

'Rommers made me think much of Ronald, and of the last week-end I spent there with his club: I am surprised to find how very deeply I love a man of whom compared with my other great friends I saw really but a little. When peace comes and with it Romney Camp again, I know his spirit will be with those of the old crowd with whom he spent such glorious days.'

In 1910 Ronald, who had gone with the Balliol Club boys to London in the course of the Summer Term, felt that he could not manage to be at the Camp in the last Long Vacation before his Final Schools. But when the question was discussed in February, he, being the only member of the Committee who knew the Rugby Club camping ground at New Romney, suggested that the Balliol boys should go there.

There is no doubt that the choice was a mistake in view of the fact that not one of the Staff accompanying the boys had been to New Romney before. But Ronald could not do more than see the party off with Keith in charge, at Charing Cross, and he did not learn till July 10, when the Camp was over, that the result had not been a success. The following letters show how distressed he was at the possibility of any misunderstanding between him and Keith, and especially between his two friends, Keith and H. H. Hardy, the Treasurer of the Club.

From W. T. Collier to Keith Rae.

'July 11, 1910. Oxford.

'I had a call from Ronald yesterday. He was rather upset about New Romney. He was very anxious you should not write too strongly to Hardy, as the latter was rather put out already and has a fairly useful tongue: however, I told him I thought you were a match for most people in that department.

'I am awfully sorry you weren't fit during the week: I am afraid it made you look rather on the dark side of things. However, "Experientia docet" (who said I wasn't a Latin scholar?).'

From Ronald to Keith Rae.

'July 14, 1910. Oxford.

'I was agreeably relieved during the week to get a p. c. from George Allen to say how much they were enjoying it all, and so the news I heard from Billy's cousin who was calling last Sunday sent me off on my bike to Billy, where I heard the dismal story, which even his customary cheerfulness could not hide. I may say I left him feeling very wretched, and when I think of it I still feel pretty bad.

'My dear Keith, I am frightfully sorry it was so unsuccessful. I *do* wish you had *wired* to me to tell me to come down as I *told you* either that Saturday or during the week. The wrath of the Professor would have been preferable to the regrets I now feel. I do wish I had come. But I imagined that all was well as I didn't hear. I am sick about it all. And I am certain that the weather and the kit and the few rows you did have made you look at the *locality* with a dismal eye. I *know* that it is ideal for a camp, provided that you are comfortable, which you obviously were not. Do write and say you forgive me. Please write to me and be kind. Billy has been very sweet.'

But he never would admit that the place itself was anything but perfect: 'I still firmly stick to the opinion that the place, as I saw it last, was perfectly ideal for such a camp, at least as ideal as any sea-side place in England.' And he spoke of the hold it would have on H. H. Hardy, who, at Lydd, 'has lived all his life on the marsh and

knows, as some of us are learning who go there year after year, some of its beauty and wonder.' And later on, when he had been to New Romney, he wrote to Keith Rae from Marlston, Sept. 15, 1910:—

'Camp was as good as the Rugby Camp always is. I cursed them all for giving the Balliol Club such a rotten time, but I must say we had a topping time. We found the water splendid and didn't boil it; yet no one was the worse for it. Of course *the* important thing, the weather, was very kind to us, though it wasn't as warm as usual.'

On the same day he wrote to C. P. Evers:—

'About the Religion Question at Camp—I did speak a little to you about it at Camp, and I absolutely agree with you. More should be made of this at a time when one has most influence over these boys. And I feel quite certain we ought to sleep in the tents with the boys. If it is arranged I shall hope to get a tent. I should love to talk to them on things that matter. Of course with the bigger boys it will be more difficult, but it ought to be possible to put the more experienced staff to look after them.

'It was a splendid Camp and I enjoyed it as usual no end. Charlie and I helped clear up on the Saturday and didn't get off till tea-time, so we slept at Cranbrook in Kent for the night.

'Two boys missed their train, so I put them on behind and motored them to catch the train at Ham Street: rather good, wasn't it?'

The present section is brought to a close with the memories of friends who were associated with Ronald in Boys' Clubs during this period of his life.

From Alfred Ollivant, whose earliest memories of Ronald are of the three days which, in the midst of his summer in France in 1911, he could not resist giving to Romney:—

'I remember well the kind of thrill that went through that August Camp when the men knew that "Mr. Poulton" was coming. He came with his friend Dick Dugdale. And I remember now the keenness with which he flung

himself into the rough football on the dunes on those glorious summer evenings.'

From Captain W. T. Collier, R.A.M.C.:—

'Our last year at 15 Oriel Street was the best of all. We were most of us pretty busy during the day, and I was amazed at his power of application; for at a time when he was Captain of the XV, he did a regular 8 hours' work a day. But when one or two of us returned from the Club, as we often did, about half-past ten, we would all gather round the kettle—either on the stairs or in the dining-room—for a last cup of cocoa. And I remember how he would laugh at some small event of the day or of the evening at the Club. For he had, in no small degree, the power of appreciating the humours of every-day existence—one of the things which helped to make him so cheerful and so human a companion.'

From 2nd Lt. Keith Rae, writing to Ronald's mother. Capt. H. R. Bowlby, who was with Keith at the time, remembers his despair at the news of Ronald's death, a few days before he went out.

'8th Battalion Rifle Brigade,
'35 Rushmoor Camp, Aldershot.
'May 7, 1915.

'I hope you will forgive me for intruding upon your sorrow, but I could not go abroad without writing to you. No one who loved and admired Ronald as I did, or who owed him what I do, could possibly say nothing.

'I shall not attempt to express what his friendship meant to me. I have been indeed lucky beyond description in the friends I have had, but I have never met a more beautiful nature than his. It is when we meet such as Ronald that we can begin to see beyond this sad life and understand what they are like who live with Him for ever. Truly "of such are the Kingdom of Heaven".

'For Ronald himself the only cruelty is that he was cut off on the threshold of a great life.

'Death has no terrors for such as he. It is for those he has left behind that the sympathy must be. It cannot comfort you altogether to think of the splendid way in which he laid his life down. It will however help you to know how he was loved by all who knew him. He

has left the world richer by his splendid life. Death can never deprive us of a happy Past with all its beautiful memories. That is the great consolation of this terrible war. Strong as Death is, Love and Goodness are stronger still.

'Please forgive this letter, but I felt I must write to you to-night. Will you please tell Professor Poulton how deeply I feel for him at this time and how earnestly I pray that God will comfort you both.

'Believe me, dear Mrs. Poulton,
'Your very sincere friend,

'KEITH RAE.'

From Keith Rae, who had asked through his father if I could tell him the position of Ronald's grave. 'He had a great love for Ronald and has felt his loss sorely.' It was written a few weeks before Keith's name appeared on Aug. 1 in the list of those 'missing, believed killed' at Hooge.

'Dugouts, 8th Battn. Rifle Brigade,
'B.E.F.

'July 9, 1915.

'Many thanks for your letter. I was very anxious to go to Ronald's grave if I could, and leave a few flowers there. But it does not seem at the moment possible. I cannot say where I am, but I am many miles away at a very notorious and unpleasant spot. You know I will take any chance I have of getting there, and will let you or Mrs. Poulton know the moment I have done so.

'I cannot realize yet that Ronald has gone and I do not attempt to do so. For I firmly believe that Death is at most a temporary parting and that we may meet those we love after the grave.

'I wish I could tell you and Mrs. Poulton how deeply I feel for you in your sorrow. For us others it is so much easier. As Billy Temple put it, we can try to follow in his footsteps.

'You ask me to write a few of my recollections of him. I would most willingly try, and, if it please God to bring me safely through this war, I will. But life here is so arduous and so distracting that it would be almost an impossibility to do so now. There is but seldom time to call one's own, and one is never "off duty".

‘It is a time of sorrow and tears for us all, is it not? I believe that the Clouds will lift and that the Sun will shine forth again.

‘Will you allow me to send my love to Mrs. Poulton?’

From Keith Rae to the Rev. E. C. Crosse, C.F., D.S.O. (8th Devons), written July 16, 1915:—

‘You see that dear old Bussell and Bob Brandt have gone? It is terribly sad, but nothing can come as a surprise since Ronald has gone.’

I conclude this section with words written by Cyril Bailey in *The Balliol Club Magazine* (1915, pp. 4-6). Here Ronald is remembered, as he would wish to be remembered, among his comrades and friends in the work. Eighty-five members of the Club, officers and boys, were known to be serving in the Army or Navy by March 1915, and, in addition to the officers who have fallen, H. R. Bowlby and W. T. Collier have been wounded.

‘The war, which has brought mourning to so many homes, has not spared the Club, and has indeed taken of our best. We have lost four former members of the Committee, including an ex-President and an ex-Secretary. . . . If we are to find the kind of comfort which shall make it possible to say of us, “Blessed are they that mourn,” we must let our thoughts dwell not on the blank that we feel now, but on the good days when they were with us. We must try and remember what manner of men they were and let their spirit become, as it were, part of our lives, that we may be able to feel a little as they felt and perhaps to do some small part of the work they might have done, if they had been spared to us.

‘Of the four Druce Robert Brandt was the least intimately associated with the Club. He was a great scholar and a good athlete—he kept wicket for Oxford against Cambridge in 1907—and a man of very many interests and quantities of friends. His life in Oxford was always a busy one, yet he found time in it to be with us often in the Club. And what we probably remember best about him was a most infectious energy and a plentiful sense of humour—and behind it a strength of character, which almost unconsciously made anything mean or unclean

impossible for him. No one could be with him and not feel lifted into a more vigorous and healthy atmosphere.

'Ronald William Poulton Palmer, or "Ronnie Poulton", as all his friends called him and many to whom he was only a great name, was also a man of many great gifts—undoubtedly the greatest Rugby football-player of his generation and the most popular man wherever he went—yet his absolutely unaffected humility and his power of sympathy made him the truest of friends to "all sorts and conditions of men". He was very much in the Club and was an obvious idol: nothing could have been easier for him than to let himself be the centre there of a cheap popularity. But with us he was always just one of us—known to all and ready to throw himself into anything that was going on. Only those who knew him well know how much he gave up for the Club, and how he valued his hours there. . . . He said himself that the Club had helped him, as nothing else could, to understand different people and different points of view.

'Of the other two it is harder to speak, if only because their days in the Club are more recent; and each of us will have his separate recollections of them. To those who were in Camp last July, its most prominent feature, as we look back on it now, will probably be the presence there of Stephen Reiss. He had been prevented by illness from going to the front with his regiment, and chose to spend with the Club the last days of his leave. He came almost silently and seemed to take no very leading part in what was going on—he was still weak—but every one felt his presence. And so it was always: he was naturally a shy man and hated any kind of self-assertion, but his friendships were deep and strong, and it was impossible not to feel his profoundly religious nature. Not that he often spoke of his religion—though few who were there will forget the night in Camp when he spoke to us at prayers—but in a very rare way he lived it. One felt that he attached other values to things than the ordinary man, and that the spiritual side of life was always with him. He gave the Club of his best; and those who knew him in it must see to it that something of his spirit remains with them.

'It is many months now since we heard that Keith Rae was "wounded and missing", and we can hardly dare hope that we shall see him again. His connexion with the Club was closer and longer than that of any President we have

had, and extended over nearly the whole of its existence. He devoted himself to it in a way that was almost marvellous. He knew not only every member as a personal friend, but the parents and home of almost all of them as well. He was in a very peculiar sense the life of the Club, and it would almost be true to say that the Club was his life: certainly nothing was dearer to him. He too was a shy man, but one of those whose shyness makes them talkative, and this habit sometimes gave people a wrong impression of him. . . . His manner was so courteous and deferential to every one, that sometimes one asked whether he really understood men and distinguished between them. But these doubts were soon dispelled when one came to know him; few men had a clearer or more serious purpose in life than Keith Rae, few knew better the men and things which he liked and loved and those of which he disapproved—for he could hate too and burn with anger where he thought there was injustice. And it was because he was so definite himself that he was able—perhaps more than any one else—to give us the ideal of what the Club might be, a place where amid much diversity of lives and occupations and interests the members might be united in a fellowship stronger than all differences, where behind all the bustle and noise and variety of our energies we might know the power of friendship and feel the presence of God.

‘Of those who have known these four in the Club, some are still in Oxford, many are fighting, as they fought, for our country and for ideals even greater than country; wherever we are, let us from time to time allow our thoughts to dwell on these leaders whom we loved in the Club and we shall be stronger to meet what may come to us.’

VIII

RUGBY FOOTBALL AND OTHER SPORTS IN OXFORD YEARS

How often in that poplar-haunted space,
Athwart the meadow mist, the westering sun,
We watched the mimic battle sway and roll
This way and that; and loved his gallant grace,
The swift elusive swerve, the buoyant run,
The breathless sudden glory of the goal!

R. FANSHAWE in the *Oxford Magazine*, June 18, 1915.

It is quite impossible for me to tell you how much I feel for you. The news came as a terrible shock to me, for I, too, have suffered a great loss.—Lt. F. N. TARR, Leic. Regt. (with Ronald in the 1909 Oxford Rugby Team, and International Teams in 1909 and 1913), killed July 10, 1915.

DURING his first term, Ronald suddenly became the centre of much controversy in the public press and in football circles everywhere, especially at Oxford. Up to this time he had kept in the comparative quiet of school life and avoided publicity as far as possible. It is stated in the *News of the World*, May 9, 1915, that he refused to send his photograph for reproduction to the editor of an illustrated paper, saying 'that he was sorry not to oblige, but he did not approve of schoolboy players being made so much of in the Press'. But this quiet enjoyment of the great game with his friends was now over. The constitution of the University Rugby Team to play against Cambridge is the most exciting athletic event of the Autumn Term, and Ronald, who had often encountered Oxford College teams, was almost certain to be discussed, and discussed he was as few boys of nineteen have been. But he took it all very easily and lightly, paying little attention to it, and continuing to play as well as he could whenever he was asked.

It must not be supposed, however, that he neglected competent criticism. Hugh Martin (Major, R.F.A.), who was at Balliol and in the 1909 'Varsity team with him, remembers that—

'Ronnie and I used to train together in the Balliol field when there was no 'Varsity turn-out on. We would run up and down the field together, passing and re-passing, as he said he must learn to combine.

'He was the cheeriest and most delightful of men to play on the same side with, always apologizing for a pass that went astray, often when it wasn't his fault even. He was never depressed, and never thought he was beaten till the whistle went.'

It is natural enough that Ronald's play should have provoked differences of opinion. His Dragon and Rugby records show that he was a remarkable all-round athlete, who, almost from the first, had shown a peculiar aptitude for three-quarter play. I think it likely that the early development of his powers of running, dodging, and feinting in the dearly loved game of hide-and-seek with his family and friends at St. Helens helped him to become what he was. It is probable that in most men such individual powers would be the expression of an individualistic temperament: it would be natural when watching some brilliant display to assume that Ronald was an individualist by nature. But, as those will know who have followed his family and school life, this was the exact opposite of the truth. All Ronald's happiness in life was social—in games as in deeper things. Athletic competition, the most individual of all sports, he never cared for, although he excelled as a boy, and might have excelled as a man, in more than one event. Rugby Football he loved far more than any game just because of the combination which is its essential feature.

Sir Godfrey Lagden, writing on 'The Game and its Ethics' in *The Rugby Football Annual*, 1914-15 (pp. 19-22), finds the qualities required to be those—

'which *Punch*, the truest interpreter of British character

and moods, has given in reply to the question "What is a Sportsman?" "As I understand the breed, he is one who has not merely braced his muscles and developed his endurance by the exercise of some great sport, but has in the pursuit of that exercise learnt to control his anger, to be considerate to his fellow men, to take no mean advantage, to resent as a dishonour the very suspicion of trickery, to bear aloft a cheerful countenance under disappointment, and never to own himself defeated until the last breath is out of his body."

When to these great qualities we must add another and that the most essential of all—the instinct of combination, the direction of thought and effort for one's side rather than for one's self—we recognize that, in Sir Godfrey's words, 'there is in Rugby Football something noble that counts for more than winning goals and points'.

One little indication of Ronald's feeling for the side rather than for himself has only become known to me as I have been writing the story of his life. When a team is photographed it is usual for the captain to hold the ball. It is evident that Ronald did not wish to be distinguished from the rest of his side in this way, but preferred to appear like any other player in the team. I infer this from the Oxford group in 1911 and from all the groups of his International captaincies that I have seen. But in his last game before the war, when he captained a scratch Isle of Wight team at St. Helens, he held the ball for the post-cards of the village photographer, who probably thought that they would be more marketable if the captain was marked out in the usual way.

Alfred Ollivant, writing of Ronald as he first knew him as the Oxford captain in 1911, shows the inner meaning of qualities that brought success in football and would have brought it in greater fields:—

'Then, as at other times, I was impressed by what was, I should be almost inclined to say, his dominant quality—his unconscious humility. I think it was in that his strength lay, his power over other men, his immense promise as a leader. He was on terms of absolute equality

with all men. He impressed one so much because he never sought to impress one at all. There was no egoism in him. He would never have sought honour, place, and power. They would have come to him. And the judgement and balance which made him what he was as a captain on the football field would have ensured him in time a place as a leader in other and more important spheres. He was the one young man of his generation who seemed to me to have the *power* and the *will* to lead the young men of his day in what I believed to be the right way. And he would have done it too. He will do it still indeed—but in the spirit now.'

Towards the end of his Oxford life Ronald told me that he did not enjoy Internationals nearly so much as 'Varsity matches. He said that the standard of play was of course higher, but the members of the team did not have the same chance of getting to know each other or each other's play. I think he felt the same in his first term, when he remembered his great school team in 1907 and contrasted it with the new and, for the time, unfamiliar surroundings. And later on, when he came to know and be known more widely, he thoroughly enjoyed the International matches. How much the social element entered into his pleasure is shown by his remark that he enjoyed the match *v.* Scotland, on March 18, 1911, chiefly because of the number of Oxford friends in both the teams. And later still when he became the English captain, and in the great matches just before his captaincy, I am sure that he derived the greatest pleasure from the games. By that time all controversy about his methods had died down, and his powers of leadership were fully recognized apart from his play. But of more importance to him was the fact that he knew his team so well and not only his own team but the rival teams also.

In the Autumn Term of 1908 Ronald, with all his capacity for doing the unexpected, was tested with men who knew each others' play far better than they knew his, and it was only natural that a satisfactory combination could not be effected at once. Nor was it possible at first

to know that he united qualities which are often irreconcilable, that his originality and opportunism were all for his side and never for himself, that, whether he achieved it or not, he always desired success in combination with others rather than success gained by his own unaided efforts. In the end all this was fully recognized, and every lover of the game felt that, 'There was no more thrilling sight to be seen on any Rugby ground than a tricky run by "Ronnie" finished off by an unselfish reverse pass and a colleague's score' (*Daily Mail*, May 8, 1915).

Ronald's play has been described and discussed by exponents and critics of the game times without number, and the impressions of many experts, including a full account kindly written by Mr. A. C. M. Croome, are quoted in various parts of this and the next section. It is therefore quite unnecessary for me to say anything about its technical aspects—a task for which I am quite unfitted. But I remember what Ronald said on the rare occasions when he talked to me of football, and these memories have now a special value. He once said that fast running was not as important as people believed, and he instanced A. D. Stoop, who although not a fast runner was very successful in getting through. This, Ronald said, was often achieved by a deceptive pace that was slower than it appeared to be, so that an opponent, running to intercept, overshot the mark and crossed Stoop's track at a point he had not yet reached. There can be no doubt that, in this and in other ways, Ronald's play had been much influenced by his early association with the great Harlequin leader. Thus his deceptive pace is spoken of in the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* for May 15, 1915, as well as his 'peculiar ability of being able to run at high speed and to swerve to either side while doing this'. This reference to Ronald's high speed recalls the fact that critics differed widely on this very point, some maintaining that he was not really a fast runner, pointing in confirmation to the ease with which

he was overtaken in the International match *v.* South Africa in 1913. His athletic record proves beyond doubt that he was fast in all short races, but the Rugby player, handicapped by carrying the ball, naturally comes to rely on his swerve and feint rather than on speed. In the match just referred to Ronald was overtaken at the end of a very long run, started soon after a successful try, and was probably too tired to keep up his highest speed to the last.

The following memories of Ronald and his play have been kindly written by George Cunningham, I.C.S., the Oxford captain who first gave him his 'Blue'. They are dated July 7, 1915, from Kohat, NW. Frontier Province:—

'So much has already been written of Ronald Poulton as a Rugby footballer, that I despair of saying anything fresh or original about him, but I am grateful for the opportunity of adding a word of admiration for a player whom I now regard as the most brilliant who played in Oxford during the five years I was in residence—from 1906-1911.

'Poulton's talents were well known at Oxford before he came up to Balliol in Oct. 1908, and in any ordinary year he would have been certain of a place in the XV. That season, however, the solitary vacancy in the three-quarter line was filled by C. M. Gilray who had brought a great reputation from New Zealand, which he completely justified. He was an older man and more seasoned than Poulton, who had not then grown to his full strength. The same four three-quarters returned the following year, 1909-1910, and it was only shortly before the match with Cambridge in December 1909 that Poulton was assured of his place in the XV. Once he began to play regularly, it was hard to realize how we had ever got on without him.

'That year against Cambridge he played on the wing and played magnificently, scoring five tries. Of all his many achievements this was perhaps the most memorable, and Poulton was the first to acknowledge the credit due to his centre three-quarter, C. M. Gilray. Poulton's position in this match raised the question whether his real place was on the wing or in the centre. There is no doubt that the eccentric course he sometimes took when placed inside

disturbed the orthodox ideas of his wing three-quarter, and he was often charged with spoiling the combination of a three-quarter line. In my opinion his occasional "unorthodoxy" was almost invariably justified by results. But as a matter of fact, force of circumstances were alone responsible for his ever playing on the wing. F. N. Tarr and Gilray were obviously centre three-quarters and too valuable to be neglected. Gilray had indeed played in earlier matches on the wing with Poulton next him in the centre, but this was never a comfortable arrangement; the centre was faster than the wing. Their places were therefore exchanged, and in the Inter-Varsity match, which I think was the first time Poulton played on the wing, the new arrangement was a great success. Yet I have no doubt that Poulton's peculiar talents really found larger scope in the centre, and the methods which sometimes confused his own wing three-quarter disconcerted his enemies far more.

'He had a fine easy swerve to which he trusted, rather than to his pace. In fact he was not unusually fast. His long stride and supple body enabled him to thread his way through a crowd of opponents with an ease surpassed by no recent player except perhaps K. G. Macleod. He ran, as every one remembers, with a curiously even, yet high-stepping motion, his head thrown back, the ball held in front at full arms' length. He missed few passes, and could pick up the ball from the ground with remarkably little change of speed. He kicked accurately, but never far; when he "punted" the ball, his knee was always too much bent. His defence was, as far as I remember, weak when he started to play for Oxford, but it improved quickly, and in his second season was as good as that of any one in the Team.

'The most dramatic of his runs that I can remember came a few minutes before the end of the match between Oxford and the Glasgow Academicals in Michaelmas Term 1909 [Oct. 30] on the Iffley Road ground. The Academicals were a point or two ahead, and had been pressing hard on the Oxford line for 10 or 15 minutes. The ball came out of the scrum on the Academicals' side, but a pass was missed. Before we had realized that our opponents were not scoring another try, Poulton had gathered the ball 10 yards from our line and dodged the halves and three-quarters. Once in the open he easily evaded the full-back, and ran the rest of the field followed

by a vain pursuit. Such was the suddenness of the run that I doubt if more than one of his own side had reached the half-way line by the time Poulton was placing the ball behind the goal-posts. So the match, which had been given up for lost, was won.

‘Invariably cheerful, seldom without a beaming smile on his face, Ronnie—as we all knew him—was a welcome companion on the football field and everywhere else. With all his qualities and gifts—of which his skill at football was only one—he was the most modest of men, simple and sincere. I never knew him speak harshly of any one, and his reward was that he was admired and loved by every one who knew him.’

From Grahame Donald, Assist. Surgeon R.N., H.M.S. *Meteor* :—

‘It was wonderful to play on the same side as Ronnie—the result of the game was always open until the very last minute. I don’t know if any one else ever felt the same as I did, but it always seemed to me that when I was playing on his side I was playing for him : the side was a secondary consideration.

‘There are very few men one meets of whom it can be said one loves them. But Ronnie’s was such a wonderful character one couldn’t help loving him.’

The following impression was written by the Rev. Garnet V. Portus, a Rhodes Scholar from Sydney University, who played for Oxford and England, and was a contemporary of Ronald’s :—

‘He’s away! He’s right! Oh-h-h-h! There! What did I tell you? That was a common sequence of expressions at the Iffley-road ground in Oxford, in the winters of 1909 and 1910. It centred round the doings of Ronald Poulton, once the wonderful schoolboy from Rugby, now the proved three-quarter of Oxford, and presently to be the idol of English International crowds. It is hard at this distance to analyse the charm of him. It was not unconnected with his physical presence. Tall and lithe, broad-shouldered and narrow-hipped, fair-headed and blue-eyed he was, and he easily took the eye of the crowd. Once attracted by his looks, the crowd were not disappointed in his play. Sometimes he was beautifully ortho-

dox ; he would do the correct thing most efficiently—take a pass on the wing, race swervingly along the side-line, slip round his opposing three-quarter, dodge the full-back, and trot around behind the posts with the crowd roaring their delight. But at other times he was entirely unorthodox. Playing in the centre, he would abandon an attack developing towards the wing three-quarter, and go threading his way between the centres and halves and breaking forwards of the opposing side, until, having lost him in the *mêlée*, your eye would catch his fair head emerging through the defending fringe, side-stepping, feinting, swerving, and ever with the ball characteristically held with both hands, at half-arm's length in front of him, and his head swaying from side to side with his swerve.' (*The Referee*, Sydney, N.S.W., Aug. 11, 1915.)

'OCTOBER MEMORIES.

'*From a Billet in France.*

'A bright crisp October day, when the hoar-frost still hangs faintly on the grass, in spite of the afternoon sun, already, about half-past two, preparing for its setting—a day when the cobwebs gleam along the ground and catch round one's shoulders or in the eyes, when there is enough nip in the air to make you shrug your shoulders, and enough sun to make you glad you are alive. The crowd pours through the gate. Every moment a taxi or hansom drives up, and discharges its burden of dames and their squires, or of luxurious undergraduates, whose legs cannot support the *ennui* of the walk down the Iffley Road. If you be of the elect, you pass to the left and find a seat, if you are in time, in the covered stand ; if you be of the humbler sort, you pass to the right and so on round to the standing room against the ropes, and keep yourself as warm as may be by patient stamping of the feet. In the stand, North Oxford is in force. Regius Professors sit side by side of the dames and daughters of retired army colonels and captains. All the latest "Rugger" gossip goes round. "So-and-so is being tried on the wing to-day." "It seems pretty hopeless against Cambridge if we can't get more weight in the scrum." "Oh, well, you never can tell. Do you remember the year Cartwright was captain?" and so on, and so forth.

'Ten minutes and a quarter of an hour pass, and the impatient look at their watches. Then two or three figures

run down the steps of the Pavilion in the right-hand corner of the ground, followed by more. The ball is kicked down the ground, and the visiting team stretch their legs before the game. Directly after, the covered stand and the "ropes" allow themselves to become enthusiastic as any Oxford audience can, and clap their hands as fifteen figures in dark blue, every one hands in pockets, step with studied nonchalance down the steps in their turn. Instantly, the well-informed identify to those around them the various heroes. "That's Lagden,¹ that very big fair-haired man." "Bain?² Oh, yes, there he is, dark with longish hair. Tackles like a bull-dog gripping your leg." "That little sturdy chap with thick legs is Dingle.³ A jolly good 'three'. Very likely to get his International." "Do you see that enormous red-haired forward? Thomson⁴ of Univ. that is. Regular Scots forward." "Now, *that's* Poulton. That thin, wary sort of chap. Goes delicately, like Agag. Extraordinary chap, simply can't get hold of him. Now, look, he's got the ball. There he is!"

'Yes, there they are! Memories!'

J. M. ELDRIDGE, Maj., R. Berks.

(From the *Oxford Magazine*, Oct. 29, 1915.)

In the following pages I have set down memories of Ronald's football in his Oxford years taken in order, and especially of his three 'Varsity matches.

Before Ronald left Rugby he must have known that his chances of getting into the 'Varsity Team in his first term were very doubtful; for H. A. Hodges,⁵ the captain,

¹ Capt. R. O. Lagden (4th King's Royal Rifles), killed at S. Eloi, March 1, 1915. A forward in the Oxford Teams of 1909-11; English International, 1911.

² Capt. D. M^cL. Bain (3rd Gordon Highlanders), killed in Flanders, June 3, 1915. A forward in the Oxford Teams of 1910-13, captain in 1913; Scottish International, 1911-14.

³ Capt. A. J. Dingle (6th E. Yorks.), killed in Gallipoli, Aug. 22, 1915. R. centre three-quarter in the Oxford Team of 1911; English International, 1913-14.

⁴ 2nd Lt. F. W. Thomson (7th Royal Scots), killed in Gallipoli, June 28, 1915. A forward in the Oxford Teams of 1912-13.

⁵ Captain, Monmouth Regt., twice wounded, twice mentioned in dispatches, killed March 24, 1918.

had a three-quarter line of unusual reputation. C. C. Watson, who had gone to Cambridge, wrote to Ronald from France, July 17, 1908: 'I only wish you'd come to C. You'd simply walk into the Rugger team there, while at Oxford you'll have some difficulty next term as they've got such a good lot.'

In this, Ronald's first term, we made a point of being present to see him play. For this reason he told his mother directly he was out of the team, adding that he was 'going to play against them on Saturday', referring to the match *v.* the Harlequins on Nov. 7. Except for this and a few words written to Janet at school, I do not believe that Ronald ever said a word on the subject to any of us, either at the time or later on when the great match came off and H. H. Vassall crocked after ten minutes, and the Oxford team—so strong on paper—was lucky in securing a hazardous draw, lucky because K. G. Macleod only *just* failed to drop a goal which would have given Cambridge the victory. Nor did he say anything about it to his Oxford friends, as I infer from the words of the Rev. Garnet V. Portus in *The Referee* (Sydney, N.S.W.) of Aug. 11, 1915:—

'But great as was Poulton's popularity with the crowd, who dearly loves to have a hero who looks like a hero, it was nothing to the affection he inspired off the field. "Sunny" is the word that best expresses Ronald Poulton's nature. He was always sunny, so that he rose superior to most of the littlenesses of men. He came up to Oxford with the reputation of being the school's football prodigy of that generation. Every one had heard of him. But, contrary to expectations, he was dropped from the 'Varsity side that year. In a small way, I had had much the same experience, and I fancied I knew how he would feel about it. So, as it behoved an older man, I sought him out, full of sympathy. But I left him without saying that I was sorry for him, for the simple reason that he was not sorry for himself. He believed the selectors had done the right thing; he was looking forward to success and a 'Blue' later on, if it came his way, and he steadfastly refused to sulk in spite of the persuasions of his friends. At the same time, he was very ready to be sorry for me.'

Ronald's account of football in the exciting Michaelmas Term, 1909, and up to the end of the year, is very brief and matter-of-fact:—

'I played regularly for the 'Varsity till the middle of the term, when I got kicked out. On Nov. 1st I captained the O. R. team at Rugby, but could not stay the night. On the 13th I played for the Harlequins against Northampton, in a game which was one of the most enjoyable I have ever played in.

'On the Monday [Nov. 29] I was back in Oxford and played for the 'Varsity against Monkstown. On Thursday, I got my "Blue", and in the evening went to the Lynam's dance, which was good fun, but would have been better if every one had been there.'

'Term ended on Dec. 4th. I went up to Boar's Hill with Mother and Father to Mr. Evans. It was a jolly three days.'

Then a night with Stanley at Goring and home at Oxford again till the Saturday, Dec. 11th, when 'we went up to London to play against Cambridge. It was good fun playing but a very easy game to win'.

Concerning the events which immediately preceded the final selection of the three-quarter line, there is no reason at all—for it reflects credit on every one concerned—why I should not tell the story just as Ronald heard it from his friends and told it to me at the time.

The Committee of the O.U.R.U.F.C. consisted of G. Cunningham, Captain; C. N. Jackson, Hon. Treas. F. H. Turner, Hon. Sec.; H. H. Vassall; C. N. Cronje; F. N. Tarr; and R. V. Stanley, Representative of the Rugby Union.

George Cunningham had made up his mind—the final decision probably influenced by the Monkstown match coming after the previous defeats—that Ronald ought to play. In this decision he was supported by some of his colleagues, as I have been told by Mr. C. N. Jackson. Capt. R. V. Stanley, too, informs me that after the Blackheath match he strongly urged in Committee that Ronald, who seemed to be much stronger than in 1908, should be

played in place of Vassall. Cunningham accordingly wrote to Vassall telling him that he would not be in the team. But it so happened that Vassall was away from Oxford on that day and the letter was brought back to the writer. Then Cunningham, having once taken the plunge, felt that it was too much to expect him to do it again. To enter into the spirit of the story one must remember the youth of the actors, and realize how much these things mean to them and to their friends—so much indeed that they are felt as responsibilities probably heavier than any to be borne in later years. George Cunningham explained what had happened to his Committee, Vassall being absent, and told them what he felt. Then F. N. Tarr said, 'Well, Poulton ought to be in the team and I will give up my place to him.' But this was not to be, for Cunningham, stirred afresh, determined to write to Vassall again, and this time the letter was received. And the best part of the story is its end, which came in a note from Vassall sending Ronald his heartiest congratulations, wishing him the best of luck, and telling him to go in and win. Ronald told me of this letter, and I could see how very pleased he was to receive it. To understand what it meant we must remember that Vassall, with his high reputation as a player and the added lustre of a great name, was in his last year, while Ronald was only beginning his second. Tarr's self-sacrificing offer was an example of that modesty and reticence concerning his own accomplishments spoken of by the *Varsity* of Jan. 27, 1910, in an 'Open Letter' to this fine player.

The letter from Cunningham Ronald fixed in his football scrap-book.

'O.U.R.U.F.C.,

'Magdalen College, Oxford.

'Tuesday.

'DEAR POULTON,

'Heartiest congratulations on being chosen to play
v. Cambridge. Go to Castells as soon as possible and get

your clothes. No smoking except pipes in moderation! (after meals).

'Yours ever,

'G. CUNNINGHAM.

'Get to bed by 10.30 and up at 8.'

'Tuesday' (Nov. 30) was probably written in error instead of Thursday (Dec. 2), for the selection appeared in the press of Dec. 3, and most of Ronald's congratulations were of that date.

The great day came on Dec. 11, after lots of rain and much anxiety as to whether play would be possible. Ronald had chosen for his mother and me two of the best seats, in the front row opposite the middle of the ground, and marred only by the stream of late-comers—apparently inevitable at the Queen's Club—passing in front and hiding the play at critical moments.

This, the thirty-seventh encounter, was the first 'Varsity match I had seen, and to me the most thrilling of all matches before or since. Many things combined to increase the excitement—the unexpected failure of the year before when the Oxford team was so strong on paper, the keen controversy over Ronald's play reflected in his entrances into and exits from the team in 1908 and 1909, with the dramatic selection a few days before the match. Then, on the day itself, there were the ominous looks and forebodings of an Oxford expert I happened to meet on the ground, the anxiety lest the turf should be too soft and muddy for play, lest the mist thicken into a fog, and the fear that these precarious conditions might be more to the advantage of the rival team.

Almost as soon as the play began all doubt was at an end. Within five minutes Ronald had made the first try, converted by Cunningham, and, before the interval, had scored the second and fifth (unconverted), the third being made by H. Martin and the fourth by Purves for Cambridge, both unconverted. Thus the game stood at the interval: Oxford 14, Cambridge 3. In the second half

Ronald made the sixth try, converted by Cunningham, and the ninth, converted by Ronald Lagden, while Martin made the seventh and tenth, unconverted, and the eighth, converted by Lagden. So Oxford won by 4 goals and 5 tries to 1 try—35 points to 3—an easy record. The previous record was also created by Oxford, in 1883, under Grant-Asher's captaincy—3 goals and 4 tries to 1 goal, or 27 points to 5.

My friend the expert who had been so gloomy before the match told me he had never known one side so completely on the top of another. Even the points scored give an inadequate impression of the difference between the teams, for Tarr broke his collar-bone after ten minutes of play, while soon after F. H. Turner damaged his knee, and Cunningham and C. M. Gilray were also knocked about rather badly. At one time Oxford was left with only six forwards, but even then Cambridge could do little against them. Ronald on the left wing and Martin on the right owed their successes to the two centres, Gilray and Tarr, replaced after his injury by Buchanan, and to the half-backs, as much as to their own fine play.

In Ronald's packet of letters of congratulation was one from a clerical friend: 'You played like an angel, in fact probably better.' The balance and caution of the expert are delightful.

Among telegrams was one from the O.P.S.: 'Warmest congratulations. I felt very proud of my old pupil. SKIPPER.'

Ronald's record in his first 'Varsity match, coming just when the controversy about him was at its height, combined with the attractive features of his play to render him, from this time onwards, probably the most conspicuous figure in the football world.

In the Lent Term of 1910, after our return from Wengen, where I had been unlucky at skiing, I heard that one Oxford undergraduate said to another: 'I'm told that Poulton's broken his arm.'

'WHAT!!!' said the other; but presently when he met his friend again he said:—

'Why, I thought you meant THE POULTON: I hear it's *only* his father.'

It must have been a year later that the son of an old friend had a dispute with a school-fellow upon the relative distinction of their friends and acquaintances, and finally settled the matter by saying:—

'Well, look here, my father was at school with Poulton's father!'

'Do you mean the Oxford Captain?'

'Yes.'

After that there was nothing to be done except by silence to accept defeat.

In his second 'Varsity match, Dec. 13, 1910, Ronald played left centre, the line being W. C. Allen, F. G. Buchanan, R. W. Poulton, W. P. Geen. The *Oxford Magazine* gives the line in reverse order, making Ronald right centre. The '*Varsity* claimed that it had first publicly advocated the arrangement of Ronald and Geen.

The contest was in every way different from that of 1909, for, contrary to expectation, the sides were evenly balanced and the result in doubt up to the last moment. Oxford began by scoring 10 from two tries by W. P. Geen, both converted by F. H. Turner. Then A. B. Ovens gained a try for Cambridge converted by J. B. Lockhart, and Geen another try, unconverted, Oxford being thus 13 points to 5. After this, Cambridge forged ahead, gaining two tries, by B. R. Lewis and Ovens, both converted by Lockhart, and the first half came to an end with Oxford 2 points down—13 to 15. After the interval Lewis gained an unconverted try, making the Cambridge score 5 points to the good, and soon after, about midway in the second half, had to retire from the field, a great loss to his side. Finally, as the contest was nearing its close Ronald gained two tries, both converted by Turner, the first making the scores equal, the second winning the game with 23 points

to 18. The aggregate score, 41, was a record for the 'Varsity match; and it was also the first time that a side scoring as many as 18 had been beaten.

Although not so thrilling to me as the previous 'Varsity match, the part that Ronald played was far more important, and 1910 was in a truer sense 'Poulton's match' than 1909. All who saw it must have been inclined to ask the question put by the *'Varsity* (1911-12, p. 131): 'What other player could have won the match as he did in the last ten minutes?'

Ronald's account of athletics in his last term at Oxford is naturally restricted to his responsibilities as captain of the Rugby Team. The new members of the Committee of the O.U.R.U.F.C. for 1911-12 were L. G. Brown as Hon. Sec., H. S. Sharp, and D. McL. Bain. R. O. Lagden served on the Committee with Ronald in this season as well as last. Ronald's account is as follows:—

'I must admit that the larger part of my time was spent on work connected with managing the Rugby Football side at Oxford. There are so many more things to do than people imagine, and even the choosing of a team in a year as difficult as this has been, requires a considerable amount of labour. We had various disappointments in the trial matches during the term, though on occasions we had good wins. Fortunately the team came on well at the right time, winding up with 3 or 4 wins, and decisively beat Cambridge by 19 points to 0.

'Just before the 'Varsity match eleven of the team spent a week-end at Cleeve Hill, near Cheltenham. It was just what was required to give us a lively feeling of fitness and to allow us to get to know one another really well. And as a team, apart from the consideration of their play, they were as nice a lot of people to be with as one could wish. After the match the team toured in Ireland and Liverpool and Manchester and were royally treated, and every one seemed to enjoy themselves thoroughly.'

The great match came off on Dec. 12. Ronald chose seats for us in the same place as in the two previous years. He played in the same position as in 1910, viz. as left centre with W. P. Geen again on his wing, and made the first try within five minutes of the start. The *'Varsity*

gives the following account of the play (Jan. 25, 1912, pp. 122-4):—

‘The ball was kicked off, there was a scrum, a short fly-kick, and Poulton was over. Try No. 1. In another three minutes Steyn had emulated his captain’s example, and then, after another glorious run by Poulton, Bullock threw himself over the line for the third try. Nothing could have surpassed the wonderful speed with which each movement was executed. . . . We remember nothing like it in a long series of inter-’Varsity games.’

Of these three tries, two, including Ronald’s, were unconverted, one (Steyn’s) converted by Lagden, making the score 11-0 at half-time.

Twenty-eight minutes from the start Ronald had one of the very few pieces of bad luck which came to him in the game he loved best. One of his swerves was a little too sharp, overstraining a muscle at the back of the left thigh, and some of the fibres were torn. It was the one match in which he would have wished to be perfectly fit to the end. The injury was by no means serious but painful, and it quite prevented him from playing his usual game. Carried to the pavilion by Brown and Lagden, he was only off the field for a few minutes while his thigh was bound up, and I feel sure that, as *The Times* said, he could not soon have forgotten the roar of cheering which welcomed him when he returned. His presence on the field encouraged his men and he was able once or twice to tackle effectively, but his running was at an end for the day and for several days after that.

In the second half, Dingle, after a fine movement in which Knott had an important share, and, later on, Bullock gained tries, the first converted, the second unconverted by Lagden. Thus the game ended in an Oxford victory, 19-0.

The critic of the *Oxford Magazine* considered that Ronald’s play was splendid up to the time of his injury, and also thought ‘that Poulton and Knott (by his clever kicking of what *The Times* writer in a brilliant account of

the game described as "googlies") decided the issue in the first ten minutes.' *The Times* takes the same view:—

'Thus Oxford won by 19 points to nothing; but the defeat of Cambridge was more crushing than these figures suggest, for if there was one point upon which the critics were agreed it was that Oxford's chance of winning was bound up with the form shown by Poulton. Perhaps, however, they were right, for the Cambridge men never recovered from the panic into which he threw them in the first few minutes. Long after he had been rendered useless it seemed that "his spirit went marching on", swinging the ball from side to side as if he were rhapsodizing on a concertina, compelling the defence to follow him spellbound.'

At the end of the same article *The Times* sums up the part played by Ronald in the four 'Varsity matches of 1908-1911:—

'He has been the dominating personality in the University match since he went into residence, for even in 1908 it was his exclusion in favour of a notoriously brittle player which cost Oxford a victory. In 1909 he scored no less than five tries; in the following year all the points by which Oxford gained her narrow victory were made by or through him; and in yesterday's match the effect of his first charge over the line can hardly be over-estimated.'

After the match came the tour of the team. Ronald went with them 'to look on'; as his thigh still prevented play. Some of their doings are described, with notes on the 'Varsity match, in a letter to the Rev. W. J. Carey, written by Ronald after the return home:—

'Wykeham House, Oxford.

'Dec. 22.

'DEAR CAESAR,

'Thanks so much for both your two letters. The first cheered us at the start and the second cheered me when it was over. Frankly they played splendidly. The forwards did everything that was wanted. They came across to a man and heeled quickly. Cheesers [Cheesman] said he had the easiest time this term getting the

ball away. And Thomas did well in my place. Knott was very good. His first two kicks were gems. And Dingle showed up unexpectedly. His try was magnificent. Of course the Tabs got their tails down after our good start. Everything happened as I had hoped. I told our fellows to risk everything for a score. So we simply hurled the ball about to start with. And I made Steyn and Bill [Geen] stay near the touch line, and so Lewis and Ovens were forced to turn in every time, and we got them in the middle.

'We had magnificent fun on tour. We had an awful crossing and they *were* bad against Dublin the next day. But after that they played well; and some of them played every game!

'Well, here we are about to celebrate Xmas. My leg is much better, and I can run about slowly. I am afraid I must stay for that trial and so shall not get to Mürren till the 7th. However I shall have ten days.

'Thanks so much for all your kindness and help to us last term. When we were a bit down in the mouth, you gave us cheerful advice, and I am sure it was through you that the Team this term has been the large happy family it turned out to be on the tour.¹ They are the best of people. Good luck for Christmas. How did the [Bolton] Mission go?

'Yours affectionately.'

Speaking of the match, Ronald told me that Cambridge had taken quite the wrong line in continually playing for safety and kicking into touch after his injury when the score was against them. The time had come for them to risk everything for a score, and he said how surprised and pleased he was to see them playing Oxford's game. *The Times* makes the same comment:—

'The chief fault of Cambridge was that they were pre-occupied with stopping Oxford and never developed a game of their own. When nothing mattered except scoring they (the faster side) actually went in for touch-kicking—very good touch-kicking, but useless in practice

¹ To this his friend remarked: 'Of course this is not true at all. It was owing to Ronald himself entirely, but it is just like him to impute his own good influence to others.—W. J. C.'

and most encouraging, morally, to their outnumbered opponents.'

Ronald's skill in Hockey was very soon realized when he came up. It is interesting that in his first game for the 'Varsity, *v.* J. L. Stocks's team of Old Rugbeians, on Feb. 1, 1909, he was playing against his brother. It was a very close game, but the 'Varsity lost 2-3. The prophetic comments of the 'Varsity were amply fulfilled in the match against Cambridge: 'R. W. Poulton made a satisfactory first appearance in the team, and it seems that his inclusion will strengthen the forward line considerably. He and Ball should make a very dangerous left-wing.'

The 'Varsity match on Feb. 24 'was a great game and brim-full of incident up to the last'. At half-time Cambridge led 3-2, but Oxford scored all the four goals in the second half, Ronald shooting two in the last ten minutes. It was Oxford's first victory since 1905, and the total of 9 goals was a record for the 'Varsity match. Ronald played in the forward line, as left inside.

Thus Ronald became a 'Half-Blue' for Hockey as his brother and eldest sister had been before him. To the same game Cambridge awards a full 'Blue'; for the two Universities unfortunately cannot agree upon a uniform system.

The 'Varsity Hockey match of Feb. 23, 1910, followed a course curiously like that of 1909. Well into the second half of this 'very close and exciting game' (*Times*), Cambridge were leading 3-2, but Ronald, playing centre forward, brought the turning-point when he 'took the ball more than half the length of the field with a wonderful run. Though robbed at the last minute, Marcon secured and scored, thus bringing the totals level' (*Varsity*). After this Oxford scored two more goals and Cambridge one. Thus Oxford won 5-4, and the record number of goals in 1909 was equalled. Although Ronald did not score, the *Field* considered that, after Leighton, who shot 3 goals for Cambridge, he was perhaps the best forward on the

ground 'whose splendid efforts in the later stages of the game had very much to do with Oxford's victory'. In this game and in 1911 Ronald Lagden played for Oxford. 'This splendid all-round athlete', as he is well described by C. J. B. Marriott in *British Sports and Sportsmen*, was even more versatile than our Ronald, for he represented his University in Cricket and Rackets as well as Rugby Football and Hockey.

In 1911 Ronald played Hockey as centre forward in the 'Varsity Team whenever he could spare the time from his work for the Schools in June. The 'Varsity match was played as usual at Beckenham, on Feb. 22, and Cambridge won 4-1. Oxford's failure was no doubt largely due to Ronald and Lagden having so many other claims upon their time: in fact the full side had only been together in two of the matches before the great event. Up to seven minutes before time Cambridge had made all the goals, but at this point a rush by Ronald and Marcon ended in a goal by the latter. The Oxford team then pulled itself together and only just missed another goal.

Although Ronald had such a remarkable record for Athletics as a Dragon and at Rugby, Inter-'Varsity Football and Hockey were quite enough for him at Oxford. What he might have done if he had chosen to train seriously may be guessed from the following recollection, probably of the year 1910, by his friend C. P. Symonds of New College:—

'I remember an incident, trifling in itself, which impressed me very much at the time, illustrating his lack of nervousness and the robust constitution of his inside. I had asked him and a number of others to lunch, and, after he had had at least two helpings of all the indigestible sort of dishes provided by the Common-Room, he suddenly remarked that he must go, or he'd be late for the Balliol Sports—at which he did a better time for the quarter than had been done in the 'Varsity Sports!'

It was the same with football. Capt. S. E. Whitnall, R.A.M.C., writes:—

'of early days when we lunched with him and Bruno

[L. G. Brown] in Long Wall before a match—Bruno serious and grave, he by contrast gay, and even before great contests as free from care and as happy as though but going for an afternoon's run. Then, he never seemed to be training—I think he was always at the top of his form. I remember Bruno lurching off a tomato and a glass of water, whilst Ronnie cheerfully joined us in the pheasant and claret he had provided for our fare.'

Statements, made in some of the papers, that Ronald was a Hockey International and that he competed in the 'Varsity Sports are erroneous. In the 1909 Freshmen's Sports he did well in the 100 yards, beating the winner in one of the heats, and in the Lent Term of 1910, his friend Mr. C. N. Jackson of Hertford, the kind and efficient organizer of all things athletic, seriously pressed him, in the enforced absence of the second string, C. Howard Smith, B.N.C., President later on of the O.U.A.C., to train for the Quarter-mile in the forthcoming 'Varsity Sports. Ronald was very unwilling to give the necessary time and attention to the, to him, uninteresting routine, and he exacted a promise that if the original runner reappeared, he should be let off—and so, after a short period of training, it happened. I remember the incident well, for Ronald talked to me about it a good deal, and I, knowing that he would never care unduly for Athletics, and that a double 'Blue' was a fine thing in itself, encouraged him to do as Mr. Jackson wished; but I saw that nothing would move him from the condition he had made.

Ronald enjoyed playing Lawn Tennis just as he enjoyed all games with his friends, but he was not a good player. This was probably due to the other attractions of St. Helens, which gave him little chance of playing the game in his boyhood. After he grew up I only played with him once, when we were staying at Marlston in July 1910. We had 3 single sets one afternoon and 3 more the next morning. I managed to win four but it was very hard work.

In Ronald's brief account of his athletic pursuits in his first Summer Term he told us that he tried his 'luck at

Cricket and made a very flukey innings of 83 in the Freshers' match': also that about this time he took part in the founding of an Oxfordshire Football Club, requiring many committee meetings.

In addition to the 83 in the second innings of the Freshmen's match on May 6, in the Parks, Ronald made 16 in the first innings, his total of 99 being just the same as that of Ronald Lagden—3 in the first, 96 in the second innings. But our Ronald was not a cricketer, like his friend: he once said to me, 'I've a good eye and can hit the ball, but it's not my game'—and he would have agreed with the criticism of the *Magazine* which speaks of 'a big innings by Poulton; but, apart from its great service to his side, his batting was not of a very high class. He can hit the ball very hard, but at present he applies his power in the wrong way' (xxvii, 1908-9, p. 295).

In this Summer Term he—

'bought a motor bike and found it an unqualified success. It never broke down; I never put any improvements on it; it saved me railway journeys, gave me any amount of pleasure, and the total cost, beside the cost of running, was only five pounds. I bought it for £35 and sold it in October for £30.'

Just after Ronald had gone down the *'Varsity* for Feb. 29, 1912, brought out an etching representing four of the chief athletes in the previous season—R. C. Bourne (Lt. Herefordshire Regt., wounded), Ronald, A. H. G. Kerry (Lt. R.E., Motor Cyclist Section), and C. W. S. Marcon (Lt. Oxf. & Bucks. L.I.)—all except Bourne born in Oxford, all except Kerry Old Dragons. The journal truly remarked on p. 184 that 'it is a unique circumstance, and one unlikely to take place again, that the President of the Boat Club, and the Captains of the Rugger, Soccer, and Hockey teams should all be the sons of Oxford residents'.

The remainder of this and a large part of the following section contain a full and critical account of Ronald's Oxford

and International football, very kindly contributed by my friend Mr. A. C. M. Croome. This division of each section into two parts necessarily implies that the same episodes are described twice, but it will be realized that they were seen from different points of view. I feel sure that Mr. Croome's able analysis and discussion of the great game in the years before the war, and of the part taken by one well-loved player, will bring to many the gift of bright and thrilling memories, recent indeed in time as measured by dates, but, because of all that has come between, dimmed and often lost as in the mist of far-off years.

RUGBY FOOTBALL AT OXFORD: 1908-1911

BY A. C. M. CROOME

Ronnie Poulton when he came up to Balliol from Rugby in 1908 immediately became 'the most discussed footballer of the day'. That means a great deal when it is remembered that Adrian Stoop was still developing the Harlequin style of play in the London district, and that the critics were still occupied in analysing his methods and were by no means agreed about their value. Poulton had, of course, imbibed some of Stoop's ideas while he was still at Rugby. Consequently when he came into 'Varsity football he was fitted by knowledge as well as by Nature to be the Oxford exponent of his mentor's teaching. Oxford is frequently described as the home of lost causes. The description may be partially true of the attitude adopted by many members of Convocation with regard to political and intellectual questions. But in practical matters such as Rugby Football it can be proved to demonstration that Oxford men do not cling to obsolete practice merely because past generations found it satisfactory. A Ranji or a Stoop will find there a general readiness to test his innovations by experiment, and no obstinate conservatism will hinder their adoption if they pass that test. Poulton provided an unique opportunity

for such experiment in 1908. He came up a Harlequin born and made. If there had been no Stoop to start the New Football he would most certainly have taken on the job. Inevitably his performances were the subject of constant and sharp discussion in a place where keen wits specially trained to logical analysis of observed phenomena are gathered together. Here it may be remarked that Ronnie's attitude towards the discussion which his play evoked was extraordinary and altogether charming. He paid due attention to well-informed criticism, but his head was not turned half an inch up or down by the knowledge that thousands more words were spoken and written every week about him than about the Vice-Chancellor or any other resident member of the University. Spoken criticism is now a mere memory; the written remains, and makes amusing reading, because in the body of it may be found a surprising number of mutually contradictory statements. 'Poulton's pace on the wing was a valuable asset to his side' is a phrase which occurs in a report of a match played early in the October Term. Next week the paper which printed it says that 'Poulton is by no means an ideal wing, because he is not fast enough to keep up with Tarr'. 'It's no use playing that Poulton against Cambridge: he's too fragile', said a man taking his tea in Vincent's, where there is much expert knowledge of Athletics to be found. 'Fragile be blowed!' said his neighbour, 'Have you noticed that he is always first up after a tackle? And nobody has taken the ginger out of him yet, not even the Scottish.' The truth is—we can see it now—that a genius had appeared in Oxford, and even Oxford, where such creatures are by no means unknown, could not immediately place him.

The Oxford Rugby team had a very good season in 1908; Ronnie played in seven of the October Term matches, and in all of them was on the winning side. At first he was tried on the wing, but against Liverpool, Richmond, and Blackheath he was placed in one or the other of the centre positions, where Stoop and other London team-

builders preferred to put him. Unfortunately he selected the Blackheath match at the Rectory Field on Nov. 28 as the occasion for his one bad game. Blackheath was the last fixture but one on Oxford's card before the all-important match with Cambridge. Consequently his comparative failure mattered more than it would have if it had occurred earlier. Moreover, Ronnie was playing at inside right, the only place on the three-quarter line about the filling of which there was much doubt. Martin was firmly established at outside right. Tarr and Gilray had proved a great left wing pair. The only question for Hodges, the captain, to decide was whether he should play Vassall inside to Martin or experiment with Poulton. Vassall was brittle, Poulton eccentric. In the Blackheath match Martin and Poulton did not hit it off. This was rather curious because they were both Balliol men and used to practice combination at odd moments. Finally Vassall, admittedly a centre three-quarter of the best International class, was reported sound. Hodges's choice was indicated. With Vassall fit and well no sane captain could have disturbed the combination between him and Tarr, the best pair of centres who had played for Oxford since the adoption of the four-three-quarter formation. Gilray on the left wing was at his very best. He was some years older than the ordinary freshman, and, well as he subsequently played for Oxford and Scotland, he never improved on his 1908 form. In fact his running seemed to become a trifle more laboured and slower in subsequent years; for proof see the gradual deterioration in his performances on the Athletic ground. Moreover, he undoubtedly possessed the weight and strength which Ronnie was considered by many critics to lack. In that season Ronnie looked like a boy playing with men. Undoubtedly appearances were deceptive. He was not found wanting in the International matches in which he took part during the Lent Term, and, thinking things over, I arrive at the conclusion that the daintiness, characteristic of Ronnie on and off the football field, obscured to some extent the solid merits of his play in

defence. To the end of the chapter the smashing tackle, which caused a runner to remember the occasions when he tried to get past Gamlin or Lyon, was foreign to Ronnie's methods. But he seldom let an attacker through when he had a reasonable chance of stopping him, and, if he missed him first time, his amazing quickness often enabled him to retrieve the error. Later, when Ronnie had grown to his full strength, and, like all great athletes, 'stripped big', no one was under any illusion about his defence, least of all the rushers or runners who tried to get through it. His one weakness was to be found in his kicking. I never saw him use his right foot or get great length with his left, and, for a man pre-eminent for his quickness, he wanted a surprising lot of room if he was to get in his kick at all : artists like Strand-Jones or the late Arthur Gould could punt in half the space required by Ronnie.

The other adverse criticism passed on his play in 1908 was really a compliment in disguise. It was said that he was liable to spoil the combination of the three-quarter line. This simply means that he already showed the genius for doing the unexpected thing, which subsequently made him the greatest match winner of all time. In any walk of life, when a genius appears, his innovations on established practice are not immediately rated at their true value ; and every time he fails to bring off one of his peculiar coups, there is a general wagging of orthodox heads. If Ronnie during his first term occasionally tried to do too much on his own, which I am not prepared to admit, his attempts were not prompted by selfishness or conceit. But I can well imagine that a sound and orthodox three-quarter, playing with him for the first time, might quite frequently have been left guessing by the unexpectedness of his manœuvres and the speed at which they were executed. The defending players also had to guess, and more frequently guessed wrong.

As all the world knows, Oxford failed to win at Queen's in 1908 because Vassall broke down. In point of fact they would have been beaten, if the referee had been the other

side of the scrum when the movement started which led to their solitary score. Hearne, the Trinity Cabby, and the other enthusiastic supporters of Oxford football, must remember the horrid feeling of disappointment when they saw Martin shorten stride to keep behind his centre, who was bravely but vainly trying to make use of an opening which would have meant a certain try but for his injury.

If Ronnie failed to get his Blue in 1908 he was first reserve for any one of the four places in the three-quarter line, and we should have won the 'Varsity match with him at inside right. Next year there never was much doubt about his playing against Cambridge, and it was felt that he was quite likely to decide the issue of a hard-fought match. As a matter of fact Oxford ran up the record score and gave an exhibition of Rugby Football which I have never seen approached.

Before the end of the season 1908-9 Ronnie was given his International Cap and played against France, Ireland, and Scotland. Adrian Stoop's influence had much to do with the selection; it was a bold act to recommend, or pick a man whose physical strength had not fully matured, and who had been left out of the Inter-'Varsity match shortly before. But Stoop is a remarkable judge, and an equally remarkable trainer, of footballers, and Ronnie completely justified his selection.

No extraordinarily large measure of that vanity, which is among the mainsprings of human action, is needed to make a man regard the Cap as a more desirable distinction than the Blue. Not so Ronnie. Professor Poulton, summarizing his own observations of his son's actions, recalling his talk, and confirmed in his judgement by the letters of many intimate friends, concludes that Ronnie's pleasure in games was mainly social. Of course he loved Rugby Football for itself, its pace, which he did so much to increase, the unique opportunities which it gives for exercising certain gifts of body and mind. So do men, horses, hounds, and even, it may be, foxes, love hunting. But Ronnie found his chief pleasure in playing for and with his friends, and

he was keenest about those matches in which no member of his side was a stranger to him. Had he been a golfer he would have preferred a good foursome before a championship single. There is something ironical about the fact that a man of this temperament should have been persistently blamed, during his first season of 'Varsity football, for spoiling the combination of the outsides by his eccentricity. We can see the truth now in the light of later experience. The presence of an exceptional genius in a football team does not immediately improve combination. But when it is realized that the object of combination should be to afford opportunities for genius then the best results follow. At Rugby Football, genius is the faculty for doing the unexpected thing, and doing it successfully. The man who departs from current canons of orthodoxy sets both his own and the opposing side guessing, but his colleagues learn to guess right sooner than his opponents. It was not to be expected that a 'Varsity team with a preponderance of Internationals among its backs should immediately feel impelled to 'play to' a Freshman three-quarter. But later Oxford and England fifteens learnt that it was profitable to give Poulton all possible chances of winning matches for them. He rarely, if ever, let them down. Times and again he scored himself; but even more frequently the actual try was made by another after he had cut out the opening; and with him playing openings often came when the odds against their development were heavy. Latterly Poulton was 'marked' by the opposing side more closely than any other player in the United Kingdom. Having an instinct for combination he made use of the enemy's tactics for the benefit of his friends. In the Welsh match of 1912 at Twickenham he and Birkett worked together cleverly and successfully. Several times Birkett got the ball and ran in a direction which indicated a pass to Poulton, who took up the proper position for receiving it. The markers were on to him like flies round a jam pot. Birkett either went on himself, or, missing Poulton out, flung a wide pass to Chapman on the wing. Ronnie

delighted in combination of that sort. His part in the movement, though absolutely essential, was quite unobtrusive. But his side profited, and his friends achieved merit.

Ronnie 'going through the brown' provided as wonderful and as exhilarating a spectacle as has ever been seen on any field of play. Polo cannot provide its equal because there are not enough people on a polo ground. And all other ball games must be ruled out because they are comparatively sedate. Every one who has played Rugby Football knows that occasionally, once or twice in a lifetime it may be, a man sees a lane through the serried ranks of opposing forwards and backs. When that happens he is over the line for a try. Ronnie was always seeing lanes.

Capt. L. R. Broster, R.A.M.C., contributes a description of Ronnie's running, and concludes it with the expression of personal affection for the man which appears in every expert's tribute of admiration for his football. He says:—

'About Ronnie's method of play it is difficult to speak because he was far too modest to talk about it; and nobody but himself is capable of analysing it. One just has a vivid impression of him running—his head back, the ball pushed out right in front of him, his knees up, and always finding touch with his left foot. It was rather curious that in his first year the Oxford Committee should have thought him too much of an individualist to break up the existing quartette, and that the English Selection Committee should have received him with open arms. In fact this delusion existed even till the next year when they played him wing three to Gilray, till he finally crushed it by scoring the record of 5 tries!

'The development of the Harlequin three-quarter game was largely due to him. He was the most dangerous offensive player of his time, with such a natural swerve and gift for opportunism that he turned the scale in many a hard-fought and closely contested tussle.

'In the Oxford side it was always a case of "get the ball to Ronnie". He was the most delightful person to play with, and as a skipper he was ideal. With him it was always "well played", or "bad luck" when you did wrong.'

The notes which above all distinguished Ronnie's football, its daintiness and its wonderful quickness, were both the product of perfect balance as well of mind as of body. Short analyses of his technique contributed to this book by expert Rugby players show clearly enough that *The Times*, always cautious in the use of superlatives, had reason when, writing on May 8, 1915, of his three-quarter play, it said 'his name will go down to posterity as probably the greatest player of all time'. But when all is said it was not solely, or even mainly, by technique that Ronnie caught the imagination and won the affection of the crowd. The late Dr. H. S. Holland, Regius Professor of Divinity, in a few exquisitely chosen words has expressed the feelings of numberless inarticulate enthusiasts. I cannot conclude this introduction better than by quoting his letter to Ronnie's parents:—

'To my grief and to my regret, I never once had an opportunity of speaking with your boy. Often, through Neville Talbot, it was proposed: but we never met.

'I knew him, therefore, only from the Football Field—that is all.

'But I have never seen anything athletic rise to such a height of beauty, as your boy in the great game. Every motion that he made was the perfection of grace and force combined.

'I used to say that I now know what the onset of St. Michael must mean, as I saw him flash down the field through the thick of his foes, like a swaying vision, as their clutching hands slipped off him as by a miracle, and he shot and swung and swerved past them all with some rapturous "touch down".

'It was a sight to thrill the very bones.

'And, somehow, one *loved* him personally for giving one the joy of such a sight.

'I loved saying his name. It was the symbol to me of something so fair and gracious. He carried the mere game up into the region in which the pure works of art are a joy for ever, and hold our affections enthralled.'

Ronnie's play in his first Oxford Term has been sufficiently described in the preceding introductory pages. We come

to the October Term of 1909, a period at which considerable interest attaches to the history of Oxford football, because Cunningham was much embarrassed in the choice of his three-quarters by the presence of so many players of capacity far above the average. At the beginning of Term Vassall, Tarr, and Gilray were in residence, but Vassall was not very fit and could not turn out in the earlier matches. In his absence Ronnie was played at inside right with Nicholas outside to him, though in a couple of matches Maritz took Nicholas's place. Then about the middle of term Vassall took his place. Ronnie was left out for him, notably in the Richmond match at the Old Deer Park. But in that game Nicholas was injured. On the following Monday the Edinburgh Academicals came to Oxford. As Vassall was also unable to play Gilray was placed inside left, the position in which he had done so well for Scotland during the previous spring. Ronnie played outside to him and Maritz crossed to the other wing. The Academicals were unmercifully thrashed, and the Poulton-Gilray combination proved highly satisfactory. In the course of that week Martin unexpectedly came up, and the Old Line, Martin, Vassall, Tarr, Gilray, turned out on the next Saturday against the Army. Their attack was good enough but there was an ominous breakdown in defence towards the end of the game. And on the following Monday the team received, from Edinburgh University, its first defeat of the season. The same four three-quarters appeared for Oxford, and again the tackling was not all that it should have been. It was also noted that Gilray was beaten for pace on the wing. Another defeat from Blackheath confirmed the impression that the Old Four did not provide the best available combination, and against Monkstown the line which eventually played against Cambridge was tried for the first time. A heavy score was made, and the figures were impressive, although the Irishmen were unluckily weakened by injuries in the course of the game. The last of the trial matches, that against the London Scottish at Richmond, ended in a victory for Oxford, but

disclosed nothing to disturb the Captain's conviction that Martin, Tarr, Gilray, Poulton formed the best three-quarter line available. Vassall acquiesced in the decision with the ready cheerfulness natural to so good a sportsman.

In the 'Varsity match of 1909 the Cambridge line was crossed nine times, and each try was gained by a wing three-quarter as the result of a movement which started somewhere near the centre of the ground. This is proof positive that the heavy scoring was the result of perfect strategy perfectly carried out by all concerned. No one Oxford player can be singled out as mainly responsible for the achievement of the side. Yet it is tolerably certain that if anybody but Ronnie Poulton had been playing on the left wing there would have been no record-breaking. I say this not because he scored five of the nine tries himself: a very ordinary performer could have taken three if not four of the openings made for him: but because the first of the five, the score which gave Oxford the start, and made Cambridge anxious, was one of the most brilliant ever seen. When he got the ball, the defence was well placed. Cambridge, not Oxford, had the extra man on the map. But he went through the lot practically untouched and planted the ball between the posts after running well over fifty yards. I had a perfect view of the performance. I was sitting on the grass behind touch in goal at the pavilion end. From there I could see that Ronnie ran almost straight: the defenders seemed to do the dodging. Here I may admit that I go to Queen's to see Cambridge beaten rather than to watch a first-class game of football. Any one who brings about the desired result, even if he be the referee, earns my lasting gratitude. That amazing try of Ronnie's immediately made me his debtor, and the debt became the greater as the tale of points increased. The burden of my debt was increased in 1910, and in 1911 adequate payment was finally rendered impossible.

When Ronnie stepped on to the field on October 22, 1910, to play against the Old Merchant Taylors many of

the spectators had not seen him 'changed' for more than six months. He made one appearance on the University Cricket Ground when he made 83 runs in the Freshmen's match by cheerful but promiscuous hitting. Since then his summer games had been played in private. It was commonly remarked that in the interval he had filled out considerably. He very soon showed, by going practically untouched through the O.M.T. team, that increased weight and strength had not diminished his old slipperiness. Oxford's captain in this season was F. H. Turner, a remarkably good leader of forwards, and a very shrewd judge of back-play. He placed Ronnie at left centre with W. P. Geen as his outside. Geen was a Welshman, who had in the preceding season made something of a reputation as a centre three-quarter in Welsh Club football. His experience had taught him to regard combination as the greatest of all possible virtues in a Rugby player. Perhaps his training had made him peculiarly capable of anticipating the movements of his reputedly 'difficult' centre. At any rate the two soon reached a very high standard of combination. Buchanan on Ronnie's right also showed that it was not impossible, or even difficult, to combine with him, especially if the object of combination were borne in mind. That object is, of course, to give the ball at the right moment to the player most likely to make the best use of it. By this time there was very little doubt in the minds of Oxford players and spectators that when Ronnie was engaged in a match the profitable policy was to play to him. It is also noteworthy that the critics of his play now cease to suggest that he was weak in defence. With increased weight and strength he found it easier to effect the smothering tackle which abruptly ends an attacking movement. There were other Rugby players whose methods would have satisfied a referee experienced in administering the Football Association's rule about 'unnecessary violence'. But most, if not all, of them were less effective in defence. It has not escaped remark that Ronnie suffered very few accidents during his career as

a footballer. He wrenched a leg muscle in the 1911 'Varsity match, and his mother recalls an occasion when he returned from an International match lacking some of the skin from his leg. There is only one other mention—and of this the details are forgotten—in all the material collected for the making of this book of any mishap occurring to him in a game of football. Yet he was most persistently marked by opposing sides. The explanation is that the exquisite sense of balance which produced his bewildering swerve enabled him to save himself in a tackle: he was always the first of the two parties concerned to resume the upright position. His personal popularity was a negligible factor in the case. Pylades and Orestes, if playing for opposing sides at Rugby, would put one another down mercilessly. Yet there is not much deliberate savagery in modern Rugby: for one thing the pace is too great to allow time for deliberation. But first-class teams play terrifically hard. Geordie Cunningham, after passing his I.C.S. examination, came up to Oxford for a fifth year. On Saturdays he generally played for the Scottish. When Oxford had a Wednesday match he would watch it. One Wednesday afternoon at tea in Vincent's he said he must give up going to the Iffley Road ground. He feared that the spectacle there presented might spoil his nerve. Some teams are rougher, some more chivalrous than others. Roughness produces roughness, chivalry chivalry. Prof. H. S. Holland's above-quoted appreciation of Ronnie's play indicates clearly what his influence on football manners was.

From the start of the 1910 season the Oxford team showed signs of the weakness which nearly proved their undoing when they met Cambridge. They could score heavily themselves but could not keep the other side out as a really great team should. During the first half of the season, up to and including the 'Varsity match, Oxford scored 342 points, of which Ronnie was directly responsible for 59, and had 88 scored against them. Perhaps the figures hardly bear out the suggestion that the tackling of

the team was weak, but figures are notoriously deceptive, and their evidence is of less value than that of trained observers. The critic of the *Field* on four several occasions notes that weak defence placed Oxford in danger. He specially exempts Ronnie from blame in this respect.

Turner's team had only been beaten once when they met Cambridge: the Harlequins had scored 13-0 against them at Twickenham in a match which provided the referee with a severe test of lung power; it was contested at tremendous pace, and he frequently needed breath to blow his whistle. The two great matches of the October Term were those against the United Services, hitherto unbeaten, and Dublin University. In both the Oxford team fairly rose to the occasion. Against the Services, Buchanan and Knott got most of the opportunities to distinguish themselves in attack and made the best of all of them. The two tries which Ronnie scored were both made for him by one or the other of these two, but he and Cheesman did great work in defence that day, and suffered not at all by comparison with Lyon, the famous full-back of the Services, who was at his very best: he twice stopped the two Oxford centres when they were clear. Many good judges thought that against Dublin Ronnie played better than he ever had before. An instance of his often noted genius for doing the unexpected thing successfully is thus described:—

'Dublin dropped out from the 25. Sampson (full-back) caught the ball and ran towards the open. There Poulton clamoured for a pass and got it. Instead of running to the right, where he was expected, he swerved to the left through the surprised Dublin forwards. This brought him among his own forwards, to whom he passed, and a couple of them handled. Meanwhile Geen, quick to detect his chance, sprinted up the left touch-line, and arrived just in time to take a wide pass and cross in the corner. It was a triumph of unorthodoxy. The chief credit belongs to Poulton, who played magnificently all through. He was equally great in attack and defence, and after Knott was injured he did the work of two.'

In the 'Varsity match so nearly lost, and so hardly won, Ronnie reproduced the form displayed against Dublin University, and even improved upon it, although his side failed to play up to its proper form. The tackling was lamentably weak, with the result that Cambridge were five points up midway through the second half.

'The strength of Oxford', says the *Field* in its account of the game, 'was founded on the possession of a player of genius in Poulton, adequately supported by Buchanan and Geen.' The detailed report which follows gives chapter and verse to justify this assertion, and shows that Ronnie was mainly responsible for all Oxford's five tries. Three times he put Geen in, and when the game seemed lost he scored twice himself from positions impossible to any other player. One of these two tries was almost miraculous. Half the Cambridge pack was rushing at him when he got the ball, and he was standing still. But when they dived for him he was not there. Once through them and in more open ground, he made the backs look like guide-posts to direct his course into goal. The reason why I choose the word 'miraculous' to describe his run is that I have never seen an extremely difficult feat performed so easily and certainly. The one small blemish on his performance was that he had a kick charged down. It was an expensive mistake, for Cambridge scored a goal in consequence of it.

Ronnie played little football in the Lent Term of 1911, though he took office as Captain of Oxford. He took his place, however, in the Hockey team, which was beaten 4-1 by Cambridge, and was considered by the critics to have tried to do too much on his own. He certainly displayed inexhaustible energy, especially at the end of the game, when most of his colleagues were run off their legs by the faster Cambridge men.

In the October Term of 1911 Oxford were less successful than usual, and, before the match, the general opinion was that they would lose. The best-informed judges, such

as E. H. D. Sewell, Hamish Stuart, and Ernest Ward, all assured me that Cambridge must win, unless—they all put in that proviso—Poulton could beat them on his own. Ronnie, I fancy, had come to something like the same conclusion, and determined to risk everything for an early score.

In the course of the Term the team played thirteen matches, winning eight and losing five; and they scored 289 points, Ronnie's share being 64, against 105. One cause of their comparative ill-success was the injury sustained by Knott in the Guy's Hospital match. He was kept out of the next five fixtures, but took part in the brilliant victories over Edinburgh University and the London Scottish which immediately preceded the 'Varsity match. At Queen's he was at his best—and how good his best was! But before the all-important game started Oxford's supporters were rather anxious about him. Another thing that proved an occasional source of weakness was a certain loss of form on the part of Geen. Certainly he scored a large number of tries, but he had to some extent lost his eye for an opening. Times and again he hesitated on occasions when his captain had cut out a reasonably good opening for him; in the preceding season he would have been in for a certainty. But Geen was also inspired to greatness against Cambridge. In fact, at Queen's the whole team fairly rose to the occasion. The forwards, extraordinarily well led by Brown and Lagden, packed well, got their full share of the ball, and heeled smartly. In loose play they were wonderfully good. Their rushes were as skilful as they were vigorous, and there was none of that horrid loafing offside, and waiting to cut into a rush started by others, which characterizes the play of many packs reputed to be good in the loose. Cheesman worked the scrum wisely and well. Knott was, as has been said, at his best. The three-quarters were brilliant, and Sampson at full-back never put a foot wrong. The men themselves were in no doubt about the source of their inspiration. It came, they agree,

from their captain. Ronnie himself, until he was injured, played better than he ever had before. He stood out by himself in the contest of brilliancy. It has already been suggested that he had some doubts about the soundness of his side and had made up his mind to take all manner of risks from the kick-off in order to establish an early and, as he hoped, demoralizing lead. His tactics succeeded perfectly, carried out as they were by himself and others whose opportunism had been developed by his precept and example.

The first time Oxford got to the 25, and their forwards got the ball, Knott punted low over the scrummage to the Cambridge full-back. It was a risky bit of play because a return kick might have sent Oxford back to the half-way line. But Knott had pitched the ball exactly right. It would have 'yorked' the full-back if he had tried to catch it, so he was obliged to wait for the bounce, and Ronnie arrived simultaneously with the ball. How he got there no one will ever know. He must have given Knott, who followed up his kick, at least five yards and a beating. His mind must have moved even quicker than his feet. Anyway get there he did and the ball bounced kindly! Not long afterwards the same pair repeated the manœuvre. Again Ronnie was in time to rush the full-back and Steyn dashed up to score. But the match was by no means over, and at a very critical moment Ronnie was injured and helped off the field. He was soon back, but limping badly. It seemed long odds that Cambridge would make good use of the advantage accidentally gained. But once Dingle averted disaster with a run worthy of his captain. On another occasion Ronnie saved the situation by a smothering tackle. He could hardly walk, much less run. But somehow he managed to cover ten or fifteen yards in impossibly quick time, and down the man with the ball before he could get into his stride.

After the match the critics, especially those who had with some confidence anticipated defeat for Oxford, blamed the Cambridge backs for standing too close up to

the scrummage in order to spoil their opposite numbers, instead of adopting a formation better suited to enable them to score. The criticism is sound up to a point. The Cambridge team was behind on points. Manifestly their game was to rub off the deficit if they could, and to take large risks in endeavouring to do so. But at all games a side only plays as well as the opposition allows it to play; and the opposing captain has a large say in determining the amount of latitude allowed. Even an Oxford man may feel a certain amount of sympathy for Scholefield, who played magnificently, and his colleagues. They were in a most awkward situation. The first two tries scored against them had resulted from quite unpromising openings. They had opposed to them Knott, Poulton, and Dingle—the last-named on the day almost as clever an opportunist as the other two. It is excusable if they had visions of a record score, and played to cut their losses. Even after Ronnie was injured it would have been dangerous to sacrifice defence to attack; so well did Knott and Dingle carry on. Moreover, the reports of the match are full of notes such as:— ‘Poulton, though very lame, retained much of his peculiar gift for being in the right place at the right moment.’ It cannot be for a moment maintained that if the teams had met on half a dozen occasions Oxford would have averaged 19 points more than Cambridge. Perhaps that margin flattered the collective ability of the winners in their single encounter. But the fact that the points were scored is a part of the evidence on which the general estimate of Oxford’s captain, as player and leader, is based. This match finished Ronnie’s career as an Oxford footballer, and in a few weeks after it he had ‘gone down’.

A. C. M. C.

IX

INTERNATIONAL RUGBY AND OTHER NON-UNIVERSITY FOOTBALL: 1908-1914

The news came as a tremendous shock to me, for once again this cruel war has robbed us of one of the very best sportsmen who ever lived. Whether playing against him or with him, he was always the same, and Rugby has been deprived of a personality that will never be replaced.—Capt. R. A. LLOYD, the Irish Captain in the season before the War, writing, when wounded, from Lady Muriel Mason Nursing Home, London.

RONALD played the first of his many games with the Harlequins a few weeks before he entered the University. Mr. Ernest Ward writes:—

‘When I went to Richmond Athletic ground to see the Harlequins trial in September 1908 I was welcomed by Mr. Smith (perpetual president of the Harlequins) in this way: “Come and see a future England International. Young Poulton of Rugby is playing to-day. Adrian is trying him in various positions. He is the greatest ‘find’ that we have had for years”. Ronnie *was* tried in all sorts of positions outside the scrummage and, in every one, to use that oft-quoted Baconianism, “succeeded excellently well.”’

His selection for his first International was also due to Adrian Stoop. The following letter was written by Ronald to C. P. Evers from Balliol, on Jan. 24, 1909, a few days before the match *v.* France:—

‘I went up and played for the ‘Quins *v.* the Scottish yesterday. It was a splendid game, and we won 8-5, though I think a draw would have been fairer. I am trying to play hockey as well this term, though I don’t think I shall be able to manage both. I am playing for the ‘Varsities *v.* London at hockey to-morrow in London.

'Don't spread it about, but I believe that I am playing for England *v.* France on Saturday. I was picked reserve two or three days ago, and Vassall scratched, and I was told yesterday that my inclusion depended upon my play in yesterday's game. After the game Stoop said, "We have to congratulate you, I think". I haven't heard a word officially so don't say anything to any one. I should rather like to play, as if I could play fairly decently I might play against Ireland. No more now.

'With kind regards to Mrs. Evers and three kisses for Sybil and baby,

'Your affectionate friend.'

Ronald's seventeen International matches are tabulated on p. 229, and Mr. Croome's critical account of them forms the concluding part of this section. In the earlier part, chiefly personal memories are recalled with here and there quotations from letters and from the football press.

Ronald's impressions of his first game, against France, won 22-0, were not very favourable, for his mother wrote to Janet: 'Ronald said he did not really do very well at the match. He felt very nervous; and the ground was terribly hard. He got a big knock on the nose which bled.'

His second International, *v.* Ireland, on Feb. 13, won 11-5, was the first victory on Irish soil since 1895. Ronald, who helped towards Palmer's try in the first half, leading to the only English goal, was evidently in good spirits after the match, and his mother's letter to Janet seems to have suffered in consequence:—

'If I make a lot of mistakes, you must excuse me; for Ronnie is here, and he and the two girls are ragging terribly. Ronnie came back this morning, having done very well, and not being much injured, only a bit of skin taken off one leg. Ronald and some others took a jaunting car on Saturday morning, and drove much the same way as you and I did all round the Phoenix Park, saw the place of the murder, and then ended up with the Zoo.'

The match, *v.* Scotland, played at Richmond, and lost 8-18, was the first of his three Internationals in which England was beaten.

The experiences of 1910 were summed up in his account of the year:—

‘I had to come back after a week [at Wengen] to play in a trial match in London. We were badly beaten, but I succeeded in staying for the Welsh match a week later. After that they had no further use for me.’

The circumstances that led up to the match were curiously indicative of the plethora of Rugby players in England, and the difficulties of the Selecting Committee. The Rugby Union had chosen a side which, in the absence of some selected players, had easily defeated first the North and then the South. Yet, when the selected players were restored, it was, as Ronald states, badly beaten by the Rest on the Saturday before the match. So, at the last moment, the team was reconstituted and made to include more than half of the side which had beaten it. The game was the first played on the Rugby Union Ground at Twickenham, and England won 11-6. This was the only International match in which Ronald played on the wing.

His account of athletics during the first six months of 1911 is confined to these characteristic words on his fifth and only International match in this year:—

‘I played for England against Scotland, and enjoyed the game chiefly because ten members of the teams were Oxford men, and seven were personal friends.’

The match was played at Twickenham on March 18, and Ronald was Right Centre. Ronald Lagden played as a forward in the English Team. England won 13-8. Ronald, although he made no tries himself, was concerned in two of them. The second is thus described in a paper I have not identified:—

‘Then came a brilliant bit of work by the much-criticized Poulton. At half-way Stoop kicked across. Coming up at top speed, Poulton cleverly took the ball, beat the opposition, and unselfishly passed to Birkett, who ran

round behind the posts. Lagden easily kicked a goal. It was Poulton's try, however, and it was Poulton who was acclaimed by the crowd.'

His sixth International, *v.* Wales, won 8-0, was played on Jan. 20, 1912, a few days before he went to live in Reading. He had rather a strenuous time over it, as he was travelling home from Switzerland, sleeping in the train, on Jan. 18 and 19, and was met on the platform and hurried off to practise with other players the evening before the match. Then, after it, he went with Dick Dugdale and me to *Bunty pulls the Strings*, and returned to Oxford by the midnight train.

During his residence in Reading, Ronald played in seven International matches. Something of his methods of training may be gathered from the *Berkshire Chronicle* for Sept. 12, 1913:—

'A local veteran Rugby player asked him last winter how he trained. "Come to Kendrick Road at seven o'clock to-morrow morning, and I'll show you," he replied. The veteran went, and saw him "fly" between the lamp-posts with a speed he could not imitate.'

It is also stated in the *Manchester Courier* of May 10, 1915, that he 'instituted a series of training runs in the early mornings, and it was wonderful the number of young men who rallied round him and turned up for a spin between five and six o'clock'.

He also often played for the Harlequins. His friend R. W. Dugdale remembers Ronald saying, 'I'm quite willing to play for them if they want me, but I'm not going to give up my work in order to play.' Accordingly he would catch the first train after his work was over, and then change as he was being rushed up to the ground in a taxi, appearing only a few minutes before the game began. Some of the players were annoyed at his cutting things so fine, as they thought, but Ronald felt that life was much too full and too interesting to be wasted in doing nothing before a match. The same spirit may be

inferred from Mr. Charles Marriott's 'usual' kindly expostulation, well remembered by Ronald (p. 211).

The feature of Ronald's seventh match, *v.* Ireland, was the failure of the place-kicking. England won by 15-0, the points being gained by 5 tries, not one of which was converted.

The eighth match, *v.* Scotland, was lost 3-8. *The Times* considered that—

'of the three-quarter backs only R. W. Poulton added to his reputation; his tackling and touch-kicking were admirable, and he was half the English defence throughout. He made what he could of a bewildering variety of sloppy passes, and on several occasions one of his short swerving runs would have set a dangerous attack going but for the blunders of the other backs.'

Before his next International, Ronald played twice against the South Africans—for the East Midlands at Northampton, Nov. 2, 1912, and for London at Twickenham, Nov. 16. In these and all later International matches he played left centre. Of the second match, won by London 10-8, *The Times* considered that the South Africans—

'neither gave nor took their passes well; and, as their back division trusts entirely to speed, any inaccuracy was fatal. . . . This weakness in tactics was emphasized by the ingenuity of Poulton, who has never wanted more looking after. Time and again he beat two opponents, and it was to the fact that three had to be told off to stop him that the success of London was largely due. His defence also was excellent.'

This must have been the match about which his friend Dick Dugdale wrote to him from Bombay on Jan. 3, 1913:—

'Your football:—Very different accounts from your own reach me at intervals, my dear old man, + a full-page illustration or caricature in the *Tatler*: with the usual overlong chin development. They never will give you a decent chin piece.'

Ronald's ninth game for England, the third consecutive match *v.* South Africa, played at Twickenham Jan. 4, 1913, was his greatest up to that time, and the third and last of his Internationals to be lost—3-9. His two famous runs in the first half, one of them scoring the only points made against the South Africans in any International match during their whole tour, have often been described and will be long remembered.

We were in Switzerland at the time, but his uncle George was present and full of enthusiasm. He had quite got over his feeling that International play would be inconsistent with Ronald's position in the Factory. At first indeed my brother-in-law felt this so strongly that he wished Ronald to defer the beginning of his work until after the 1912 match *v.* Ireland, and assumed that it would be his last. But he soon came to see that the play was a source of pleasure and pride to the men and increased Ronald's influence, also that the only cause for anxiety was lest he should work not too little but too much.

The memories of Ronald's friend, Capt. S. E. Whitnall, cluster round this match:—

'Great days at Twickenham I remember: it was made the annual gathering of our intimate group. I remember going up in a crowded taxi and ragging that they'd have to wait till we got through with him anyway! Then sitting and listening to the comments till the teams poured out—eager heads stretched forward: "That's Brown—and Lagden!" then the roar "Poulton! Ronnie!"; and oh! to have seen the sight of him in his wonderful baffling swerving run—broad shoulders, head crouched back between; the fine limbs—curiously high-lifted knees—faster really than he looked—arms at length swinging the ball from side to side. That never to be forgotten run that just failed on the very line to score after a superb and absolutely typical "Poulton" run—all the field seemed stationary gazing at him and McHardy in outstretched pursuit.

'Then there were days when he and Lagden walked over here on an early Sunday morning for breakfast, tennis, and a bathe; and when we sat in the sunshine on

the lawn and talked of great questions of the future and of social problems. I remember Maclagan¹—killed also in France—who had never met him away from football before, saying afterwards, “Well, that young fellow has got great and good ideas, and a great and good mind!”

‘All my remembrances are clothed in the spirit of his gaiety and joy of life—his ready laughter, his cheerfulness, his happiness, his extraordinary modesty.’

A fortnight after the South African match came Ronald’s tenth International—*v.* Wales at Cardiff, Jan. 18—another of his greatest games. I have been told that on the morning of the day Cardiff was placarded with the exhortation to ‘watch R. W. Poulton’. Over 20,000 spectators were present who, in the most sportsmanlike spirit, cheered the good bits of play even when they meant the defeat of Wales on a ground where Wales had learned to expect and had hitherto gained nothing but victory. England won by 12-0, all the points being made in the second half. Ronald scored 4 by a dropped goal.

E. W. Ballantyne wrote in the *Sunday Observer*:—

‘Poulton was the most remarkable man on the field. Whether attacking or defending he won the highest admiration, and the 1913 Wales-England match might be referred to in years to come as Poulton’s match,—the third game in succession of which these words were used.

A story, told in the *Oxford Times* for Feb. 22, 1913, perhaps refers to this match. A man set to mark Ronald and reproved for not stopping him is said to have replied: ‘How can one stop him, when his head goes one way, his arms another, and his legs keep straight on?’

To conclude the account of Ronald’s International play during his residence in Reading, a part of his own review of the 1913 games—including the three *v.* France, Ireland, and Scotland, not hitherto referred to—is reprinted below.

“Oh, there you are, my dear fellow. Hurry up, you’ll miss the train! you’re always late!”

‘In these words (as usual), I was welcomed by our

¹ G. S. Maclagan, Lt. R. Warwicks, killed Apr. 25, 1915.

anxious Secretary, Mr. Charles Marriott, on joining a merry party of some two dozen souls bound on January 17th for Penarth, there to obtain the rest necessary for our great encounter with Wales at Cardiff the next afternoon. On assembling at breakfast the next morning we found that rain was falling steadily, and all hope of a dry ground and ball was given up. The morning was spent in animated discussions of numerous devices for winning the match, none of which by any chance came off during the game itself, except the oft-repeated injunction of our Captain, "Remember your feet and use them, and don't forget the watchword"—but that, I fear, is unprintable. However, after a game played on a ground where the blades of grass seemed with difficulty to be holding their heads above the ever-rising flood, England emerged unrecognizable but victorious by 12 points to nil.

'On February 8th England met Ireland at Dublin. The passage of the Channel (the sea was perfectly smooth) and a troublesome wind during the game, are not sufficient excuses for the poor display given. England, it is true, won by 15 points to nil¹, but the remark of a member of the English Selection Committee, at tea after the match, was perfectly true, "Well, I've only seen one team play worse than you did, and I've seen that team this afternoon."

'The Scotch match, or, as the papers love to call it, "the contest for the Calcutta Cup", was played at Twickenham on March 15th. After a poor game England, though often in desperate straits, won by a try to nil. A less satisfactory match, from the point of view of the three-quarters, can hardly be imagined. The almost total lack of combination among the English outsides stopped many promising movements, and the Scotch three-quarters, though showing fine defence, were never dangerous in attack. The Scotsmen, however, deserve great credit for the close fight they made, as they had numerous disappointments in the composition of their team.

'Against France, at Twickenham, on January 25th, England, playing poor football, won by 20 points to nil.

'The Rugby Football Season of 1912-13 was made memorable by the visit of the South African team. I suppose, to be in keeping with Imperial imagery and ideas, we must call the members of this team our children, and fine, strapping children they were! You feel there must be

¹ Ireland made 4 points, by a dropped goal.

something extraordinary about the climate of South Africa, when you are easily given twenty yards in a hundred by a McHardy or a Stegmann, when you see the ball propelled infinite distances with perfect accuracy by a Morkel, and when you feel the weight of a Morkel, a Van Vuuren, or a Shum deposited on your chest.

'On January 4th, England met South Africa in a desperate effort to avenge the defeats of the three sister countries. It was the first International of the season, and certainly produced the finest game. The English team was fortunate in finding itself in the best of form, though perhaps not experiencing the best of luck in the field. I have not space here to give an account of this match, with its many thrills and incidents, and can only state that South Africa won by 1 try and 2 penalty goals to a try.

'Every Rugby Football player will join me in congratulating Mr. Millar on the success of his team, and not a few, in meeting them, have added considerably to the circle of their friends.' (*Rugby Football Annual*, 1913-14, p. 11.)

Ronald's football in the Reading period came to an end with one of the games into which he always entered with special zest. The village team at St. Helens plays the Soccer game on the Green and is very successful in winning its matches with other Isle of Wight teams; but Bugle-major C. Jacobs, custodian of the Golf Club and active organizer of the village sports, the Territorial sports, the cadets, the rifle range, and other movements to benefit the community, felt that it was not for nothing that the village owned, and that he had known from childhood, a Rugby International already spoken of as the probable English Captain in the forthcoming season. So, to aid the Territorial Sports Fund, he got up a Rugby match at St. Helens, to be played in the Easter Vacation of 1913, between the masters of the R.N.C. at Osborne and a team selected and captained by Ronald.

Hilda had vivid memories of the great gathering of Rugby Internationals and other players that assembled for the week-end at St. Helens Cottage:—

'In the evening we had the most amusing dumb charades. One scene was very funny: it was a debate in Parliament

on the "Naval estimates". Bruno [L. G. Brown] was Winston Churchill and Ronald his opponent, and they kept on jumping up alternately and gesticulating wildly, Bruno holding up a toy boat. It is impossible to describe how funny it was, but bowler hats came into it. Bruno has a very large head and he had Ronald's small hat and Ronald his big one, and they kept bobbing up in turn to "speak" and taking off their hats.

'On the Sunday evening Ronald firmly set us all on to paper games, and I remember noticing how different the atmosphere was from the first night before Ronald had arrived, and I should never have dared to suggest anything so childish.'

During his residence in Reading Ronald raised the burning question of 'payment for broken time' in the following letter to the *Sportsman* :—

'THE RUGBY UNION AND PROFESSIONALISM.

'It is with much apprehension that I read this morning the finding of the General Committee of the Rugby Union concerning the charges brought against certain players in Devonshire clubs of having received money for "broken time". If it is the desire of the Rugby Union Committee practically to limit the game to players who learn it at the Public Schools, and in the Services and Universities, such a finding is reasonable. But I cannot believe such is their desire. Was not this, then, the opportunity to put the game on an immovable basis among all classes of the community by making an alteration in the laws of the game relating to professionalism, so as to legislate for a carefully arranged payment for "broken time" for men who are paid weekly or monthly for the hours they work? And it is difficult to see how such an offence can be construed as professionalism. A man does not, or under careful regulation would not, receive any addition to this normal weekly wage, but would be paid merely for the hours of work missed through football. Such hours of work would, of course, not include "overtime".'

'He would then be exactly in the position of many business men who, in the enjoyment of a settled income, leave their work an hour or so earlier to catch the necessary train to the match.

'The most optimistic must feel that such an action as the

R. U. Committee have taken will do much to prevent the expansion of the Rugby game, and so reduce the value to England of the most democratic of sports.

'I only venture to write this to find out if there are any other present or past players of the game who think as I do.

'Yours truly,

'RONALD W. POULTON.

'16 Portland Place, Reading,

'December 2.'

Ronald talked with me on the subject, and I know that his feeling was that, since expenses were repaid to Rugby Union players, it was only just that working men should be repaid for the loss of wages, to them very necessary expenses, without which many of them could not play. He was eager to increase the facilities which would bring more and more men under the influence of this noble game. He believed 'that Rugby was too good a game to be confined to any particular class' ('Ixion', in the *Sportsman*, May 8, 1915).

These were his motives in raising the question, motives in harmony with his whole outlook on life; but there was the object-lesson provided by other sports, and the problem whether grave dangers could be avoided if this concession, reasonable as it seemed to be, were made. A writer in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* for May 15, 1915, states that 'the arguments laid before him sufficed, I know, to make Poulton change his mind', and the fact that the subject never reappeared in our talks together supports the same conclusion; for Ronald would not, I think, have dropped the subject if he had retained his opinion.

The four International matches of the last season before the War, under Ronald's captaincy, were played during his residence in Manchester. When he went north in September 1913 he found so many old friends in the Liverpool Team that he was glad to accept the invitation

to play with them. There was Dum Cunningham, one of his greatest School House friends at Rugby; Freddy Turner, his Oxford Captain in 1910; Tracey Fowler, who had played against him for Cambridge and also at hockey for Seaview; and Dick Lloyd, the Irish Captain, who had played against him in International matches in 1912 and 1913.

Thus Ronald became one of that wonderful northern team, captained by F. H. Turner, a former Scottish Captain, and including the captains of England and Ireland, as well as International reserves for England (Fowler) and Scotland (Ross). The team, in the season 1913-14, scored the record number of 838 points against 229.

His Manchester friend, Mr. Delahunty, remembers that Ronald 'had great praise for the excellent treatment received from the trainer attached to the Manchester United Club ground'. The hours of work at Mather and Platt's were sometimes a difficulty; for the rules prevented him from leaving the workshop before 12.30 on Saturdays, the very time at which the train started for Liverpool. 'W. L. S.', in the *Athletic News* for May 10, 1915, tells of one occasion when Ronald made the journey in a taxi, accompanied by his foreman, Mr. J. Mundy, strict enforcer of rules but enthusiastic lover of football, and of how, just as Ronald was in the middle of changing his clothes, they were held up at a level-crossing in a crowd of factory girls waiting to cross the line. Mr. Mundy, so Ronald told us, was rather shocked at the effect of Trial matches and Internationals on the hours of work, and on one occasion asked him what his people thought of it. 'Oh, they don't mind', was his reply. The foreman thought a moment and said, 'Well, I'll let you go, Ronnie.'

In the Trial matches of the season Ronald played at the top of his form, and before Christmas it became known that he would captain the English Team.

The first of the four great matches was that against Wales, played in the presence of 30,000 spectators at Twickenham, Jan. 17, 1914, and won by England by

a single point, 10-9, viz. by 2 goals to 1 goal and 1 dropped goal. Ronald's play in this, his fourteenth International match, is thus spoken of by *The Times* expert:—

'In the circumstances of this game England's victory was alone made possible by the soundness and resource of the greatest three-quarter back that the country has had for a quarter of a century. . . . Did ever man do so much for a side as Poulton? When over and over again England looked to be *in extremis* it was some wonderful kick by Poulton, some electrifying cut through, some clever steady-ing influence among the backs that kept the Fifteen together. . . . Wales, the better team of the day, retired beaten by fate and Poulton.'

This match is one of the few in which I am able to quote Ronald's comments. He wrote to his brother-in-law, Dr. Ainley Walker, from Manchester, Jan. 19:—

'Yes, it was a baddish game, at least the play was not very high class, but there were purple patches, especially when I kicked the ball into the other fellow's stomach, and he only had to walk over!! However on the game I was satisfied personally, though not with the forwards by any means. Got back yesterday. Millions of letters to write and I fear the Curate is going to call! I must try and get to Oxford at time of Irish match.'

Ronald's fifteenth International was the match *v.* Ireland, Feb. 14, 1914, the last International played at Twickenham. The attendance is said to have been a record, *The Times* estimate being 40,000. Ireland made 7 points in the first few minutes and was leading 7-6 at half-time. Although, as one of the critics said, this 'would have broken the back of many a side', England finally won by 17-12, viz. by 1 goal and 4 tries to 1 goal, 1 dropped goal, and 1 try. Referring to the anxious moments in the first half *The Times* remarked: 'It was inspiring to see how the winded men pulled themselves together, encouraged by the voice and nursed by the touch-kicking of their captain.'

Capt. R. A. Lloyd, 1st Liverpool Scottish, the Irish captain, player in seventeen Internationals of which five

were *v.* England (1910-14), has written from the front his memories of Ronald and of this great match:—

‘I think, as I have probably played more games both with and against Ronald Poulton than most men, I may be permitted to pen these few remarks about his play. I think that during my experience of Rugby Football, Ronald Poulton was the greatest player I ever came in contact with: it was the glorious uncertainty of his play which always appealed to friend and foe. I think I might sum him up in saying, it was not what he was doing, but what he was going to do which made him the great player he was. I studied his play very carefully, and I don’t ever remember him doing the same thing twice.

‘During the Season 1913-14 when I played in the same Liverpool XV I used to try and follow his movements when once he got hold of the ball, and I am perfectly certain that it was only by being a born footballer he could do the things he did. I never knew where he would be or what he would do when once he got the ball: his swerve made him so hard to follow even if you were playing with him, not only if you were unfortunate enough to be playing against him.

‘We had a great trick together which we used to call the “Scissors”: it brought in many tries and I am sorry to tell it—for it is against myself—as he played it on me once too often.

‘The “Scissors” trick was this: when I had the ball, and Ronald was running beside me just as if he was going to take an ordinary pass, he would suddenly change his direction and come racing straight across at me and practically take the ball out of my hands, and breaking clean through would run right across to the opposite wing. It was a favourite trick and nearly always brought a try, as I used to try and follow him up and take the pass if he could not beat the back. Well, the Irish-English game at Twickenham in 1914 came off and I warned the two Irish Centres to watch for the “Scissors” as he was sure to try it, and well on in the 2nd half Ronald worked it on us as well as ever he did. He took the ball from Davies the English outside half and cut through beautifully, and we never saw the way he went till he handed the ball to the ever-handy Pillman to score the try which practically decided the game. This try was one of the best I ever saw him make and we always used to rag each other about



RONALD

DICK LLOYD

THE ENGLISH AND IRISH CAPTAINS IN THE SEASON BEFORE THE WAR.

From a photograph by the late D. Cunningham, at West Derby, near
Liverpool, March 1914.

it afterwards, as before the game we both said we each knew the other's favourite tricks.

'He was a player who always played for his side and never for himself, and he loved his football as it ought to be loved. It will be a very long time before a Rugger crowd will have the pleasure of seeing another Poulton, as he was a born genius when once he got that ball into his hands. It was as much a pleasure to play against him as with him, for he was always the same fascinating figure, apparently doing nothing but always doing a great deal.'

It is as it should be that memories cling round the last International on the London ground of the Rugby Union. Mr. Alfred Ollivant wrote May 24, 1915, of an incident described later on in his beautiful picture of Ronald—'The Cost'—in the *Atlantic Monthly* for February 1916:—

'Last year in the spring when I heard that England v. Ireland was to be played at Twickenham I went to see him play. It was the last International played there, and everybody agreed that it was his day. A little incident of the game stays with me. Ronald and an enemy three-quarter emerged out of some kind of death-grapple; and the enemy three-quarter gave Ronald a little pat that was clearly a caress as he retired to his lines. Another man might have evoked a caress but not of the peculiar kind that lingers with me still. There was more than friendship in it: there was affection.'

Before the game the teams lined up and cheered the King, and the captains were presented and shook hands at the interval. The ceremony had its humorous side, described by Ronald to Mr. Delahunty: 'He seldom spoke of football, though I am keenly interested in it. But he did speak with evident relish of one occasion when he was called from the field to be presented to His Majesty, and all he had time to do was to wipe his hands, which were very dirty from handling the ball, on the back of his shorts. He would smile delightfully when he demonstrated exactly what he did, though he confessed to feeling very nervous at the time.'

This was also the match after which Ronald, while taking

his bath, discussed theology with his friend the Rev. W. J. Carey, who has described the incident in the *Church Times* of May 14, 1915. I can imagine the scene as if I had been present; for it was my privilege, as the captain's father, to visit more than once the English dressing-room after a match and to see fifteen of the finest young men the country possessed, some taking baths, others strolling about or sitting, chatting and smoking cigarettes, displaying the while a magnificent muscular development in all its glory. I remember, too, Mr. Carey joining us at tea, laughing heartily at the scene he had just left, and telling us of the systematic soaping of Ronald's head during the discussion.

The match *v.* Scotland, Ronald's sixteenth International, was played at Inverleith, March 21, and won by England 16-15. It was the forty-first match between England and Scotland and attracted the biggest crowd, over 25,000, ever seen at a Rugby game in the north. In the first half Will gained an unconverted try for Scotland and Lowe one for England. In the second half England with two converted tries by Lowe and one unconverted by Ronald was leading by 16 points to 6, for Scotland had meanwhile scored only 3 from an unconverted try by Huggan. Then came a mighty effort, and with a dropped goal by Bowie and a converted try by Will the Scottish score rose to 15, and the great game came to an end in a desperate struggle in the course of which Pillman's leg was broken. The English team was also unlucky in that Maynard had strained his knee early in the game.

Dr. Edward Gane, who saw the match, has written of Ronald's leadership:—

‘In the early part of the match the English team seemed quite disorganized and a thorough beating seemed likely. But the Captain rose to the occasion. It was thrilling to me to see the coolness and resource he exhibited. The effect on the team, quite apart from his brilliant play, was obvious, and an experienced Rugby player and I came away from the match (won at the last moment) with an increased admiration for a player in whose Rugby career

I had always been interested. And it was his personal influence over those whom he led, even more than his play, that won my regard.'

Ronald's old Rugby friend Lt. C. C. Watson, R.F.A., wrote from the front Feb. 21, 1917:—

'The last time I met Ronnie was at the Rugger International at Edinburgh in 1914. My wife and I had a long talk with him before the match, and he was the same unaffected boy as ever, though captaining the English team at the time. I little thought it was the last time I should see him.'

The correspondent of the *Morning Post*, in the issue of May 8, 1915, expressed his belief that this was the cap Ronald prized most, and said of the match that it was 'one of the most brilliant games ever played'. There is this evidence to show that the game had a special place in Ronald's memory: it was the only International Team since his sixth, *v.* Wales on Jan. 20, 1912, of which he obtained a photograph. It shows him without the ball, and with L. G. Brown in his usual position on Ronald's left.

A few days before the match *v.* France, Ronald was the guest of the evening at the Annual Dinner of the Clifton Rugby Football Association, on April 4th. The following report of his speech from the *Bristol Times and Mirror* of April 6, I owe to the kindness of Mr. E. S. Bostock-Smith and Mr. J. Evans. In reply to the toast of his health Ronald said:—

'In his early days he was nearly discouraged from playing football. When he was eight he got into parental disfavour for kicking stones along the road, and later, at school, there was the son of a South African Chief who believed the principle of the game was to regard the ball as of no importance, but rather when the two sides were drawn up to lay out all his opponents and most of his own side. He remembered very clearly being chased down the field by the fierce black, and he was faster than the speaker (laughter). He was now the ex-Sultan of Zanzibar. Referring to the International matches this season, he said

he did not think there had been any captain of an International team which had won the triple crown by such a narrow margin of points. In a way it was a misfortune they should have won by only the narrow margin of seven points; but he thought in the three matches they were the best side. He pointed out that one of the best signs of prosperity of Rugby in England, and other countries as well, was that the Selection Committees had such great difficulty in picking their teams. In their own case they could have picked two or three teams, which he believed would have gone as far—with one exception, and that of a gentleman* present whose name he would not mention in order to spare his blushes (applause). As another indication of the Rugby revival, he instanced the re-starting of the Tyldesley Club—one of the oldest clubs in England, which was resuscitated two years ago. It seemed the game, as played by certain clubs, was tending towards playing rather to score tries than to prevent being scored against. Whether it was good or bad he did not know, but he had watched Northern Union clubs, and he certainly thought that method made the more attractive game to watch, and he believed it was the more attractive game to play. In conclusion, he made a plea that in districts where clubs were numerous and strong they should help the clubs in outlying districts.'

Ronald's seventeenth and last International Match was that *v.* France, played at Colombes, about 8–10 miles from Paris, on Easter Monday, April 13, won by 39–13, viz. 6 goals and 3 tries to 2 goals and 1 try. Ronald made 4 tries, 2 in the first half and 2 in the second, all converted by Greenwood. His fourth try was the last score in the last International match.

The *Field* of Apr. 18, after discussing the game, says of the English Team of 1914:—

' . . . As, in spite of changes, the character of the team was maintained, it is difficult to ascribe this to anything but athletic ability combined with good generalship. This last quality was particularly exemplified by R. W. Poulton. who may challenge comparison with any English international player for general utility. His chief quality

¹ W. R. Johnston, of Bristol, the full back.

has this season been his quick apprehension of every emergency and opportunity in defence and attack. Much has been said of his dodging, but his effectiveness has really lain more in his promptitude in discovering the right direction for his runs and the point at which he could best support his comrades.'

'With England's victory over France,' said the *Sporting and Dramatic*, '... the curtain may be rung down on the most successful Rugby season of recent years.'

Full accounts of the match appeared in the French journal *Sporting* for Apr. 15, and *l'Aéro* for Apr. 14. A few paragraphs quoted below are sufficient to show the generous spirit in which the French accepted the defeat. The first three extracts are from *l'Aéro*:—

'S'il peut être pour nous une consolation au désastre d'hier, nous la trouverons dans le fait que nous avons eu devant nous une merveilleuse équipe, qui comprend quelques joueurs qui resteront dans les annales du rugby britannique!'

'Ce Poulton, notamment, est impressionnant, magnifique, charmant. Et l'envie vous prend de lui chanter: "C'est Poulton charme que je t'aime."'

'Poulton est bien réellement le plus joli attaquant que nous connaissions, et ses feintes, ses crochets, ses trouées, rapides et élégantes, font de lui le meilleur centre opérant dans une équipe européenne. A côté de lui, l'étoile de Watson ne pâlit nullement, et ce joueur fut bien le digne auxiliaire du grand Poulton. Comme lui, il attaque dans un style éblouissant.'

The following are from *Sporting*:—

'Les spectateurs de ce match ne s'en plaindront pas. Vingt mille personnes ont enfin pu contempler du beau jeu, du vrai jeu classique, simple, efficace du rugby de grande classe.

'Certes, cela faisait mal au cœur de voir cette ligne anglaise pénétrer dans nos rangs avec une facilité dérisoire et une quiétude complète; mais quelle sensation n'éprouvait-on pas à admirer cette rapidité de conception, cette sûreté d'exécution, ce chic, ce fini dans tous les mouvements!

'Pas une faute dans la position des hommes, pas un

raté : le ballon partait raide de la mêlée, parvenait à Davies, lancé à toute volée, qui filait droit dans un trou et sans feinter, par une simple déviation de course, ce dernier amenait sur lui toute notre défense, Caujoles compris. Une autre fois, c'était Poulton qui redressait d'un seul temps l'attaque et semait nos pauvres trois-quarts en "swerwant" au milieu d'eux par des déhanchements de buste des plus harmonieux.

'La démonstration fut vraiment splendide, elle fut conduite par des virtuoses, et nous devons nous incliner devant ces maîtres qui rappellent les plus grands ténors de l'école Galloise.'

'Eh bien, Messieurs de France, dont j'excepte André, avez-vous vu comme ceux d'Angleterre "ils s'en allaient", comment un Poulton ou un Lowe, ils "savent courir en première, deuxième ou troisième vitesse à volonté".'

'Comment l'un des "huit" de la mêlée sait, à l'occasion, piquer un sprint, fût-il de 50 mètres.

'Avez-vous vu ?'

The front page of *Sporting* bears the illustration, reproduced opposite page 230, of Ronald swerving away from André. The great French three-quarter was for long a prisoner at Erfurt, having been captured, wounded in the heel, in an ambulance, during the early weeks of the war. Ronald was so pleased with this instantaneous photograph that he wrote to the office of the journal in order to obtain copies, 'parce que c'est la plus belle représentation de ma "swerve" que j'ai jamais vue.' His letter is reproduced in the issue of April 29, p. 272.

As a further comment on the match, *Sporting* of April 15 published, on p. 242, the amusing illustration here reproduced. The three pupils, accompanied by the Gallic cock, are the leading members of the Central Rugby Committee of the 'Union de Sociétés françaises de Sports athlétiques', the foremost being M. Charles Brennus, President, the second M. Bernstein, and the last Allan H. Muhr, Secretary. Bernstein went to the front; Muhr, an American, entered his country's Ambulance Field Service; Brennus is above the age of military service.

Accepting seriously the hint of the humorists, *Sporting*

invited Ronald to contribute a criticism of French Rugby. This article, in the issue of May 27, p. 340, summed up an experience going back to the Anglo-French match of 1909. The French forwards, he considered, had made the most rapid progress—far more so than the three-quarters.

LA DÉROUTE DE COLOMBES—CE QU'EN PENSENT NOS HUMORISTES.



Entrez-donc, vous n'êtes pas de trop.

'Ils ont appris la valeur de la vitesse dans le jeu ouvert, ils savent pousser des "rushes" très effectifs et leur jeu à la main est en très gros progrès. Ils savent, en un mot, aider de parfaite façon leurs trois-quarts.'

On the other hand, in the formation of a compact scrum and in getting hold of the ball in the scrum they had much to learn.

‘Les avants paraissent ignorer les principales règles de la mêlée, qui sont : une formation rapide et compacte, une dure poussée, en même temps qu’un talonnage rapide et enfin une sortie de ballon très nette, nullement gênée par les talons. En appliquant ces règles, seulement vous pourrez donner une chance à vos demis.’

The three-quarters, he considered, were excellent in defence and had greatly improved in their passing. Their failure was in attack.

‘Je reproche aux trois-quarts deux fautes très graves.

‘La première : une tendance à courir en travers du champ.

‘La seconde : un manque de “personnalité”.

‘Certes, les combinaisons sont indispensables au succès d’un team, mais il est reconnu que c’est une erreur, une très grosse erreur, de passer le ballon à un partenaire, quand l’on n’est pas certain que ce dernier est dans une position plus favorable que la sienne.

‘Je dis une très grosse erreur, car c’est donner à un autre homme la responsabilité d’un mouvement qui ne sera peut-être pas conduit comme vous pouviez le faire.

‘Dans chaque mouvement, il est essentiel que l’une des deux méthodes suivantes soit mise en pratique. Ou bien le demi fera une ouverture pour son centre, ou bien le centre rendra ce même service à son ailier.

‘Il n’est pas difficile de faire une ouverture si vous suivez certaines règles.

‘La plus importante consiste à courir à toute vitesse et “droit” sur l’homme que vous voulez annuler et de passer le ballon, quand vous le voulez. Il est difficile alors à votre adversaire de savoir de quelle façon vous le passerez et quand il le voit il lui reste trop peu de temps pour se décider. Mais si vous courez en travers du terrain, il est très facile de vous arrêter, car il suffit de vous pousser simplement en touche.’

He had no criticism to pass on the play of the back, M. Caujolle, to whom he offered respectful congratulations.

In conclusion, Ronald spoke of the pleasant memories of the match, the hospitality of the French Rugby Union,





THE LAST GAME BEFORE THE WAR, APRIL 16, 1914, AT ST. HELENS.
From a photograph by A. W. Wade of St. Helens, I. W.

[Facing p. 227.]

and the generous attitude of the French Sporting Press. He felt, however, bound to answer the criticisms on the referee printed in some of the papers.

‘J’ai lu des critiques sur l’arbitre dans plusieurs journaux ; on l’accusait d’avoir favorisé l’Angleterre et l’on réclamait pour l’avenir un arbitre français. Quoique je ne sois pas enthousiasmé pour cet essai, je tiens à protester contre la première insinuation. Tous les arbitres anglais sont de bons sportsmen. Ils ne pourraient arbitrer s’il en était autrement. Et tous les véritables sportsmen arbitrent le jeu honnêtement, pour la cause et le bon renom du rugby et sans aucune considération des clubs ou des nationalités des teams opposants.’

Three days after the match *v.* France, i.e. on April 16, the Thursday in Easter week, Ronald was playing his last game of football before the War and visiting St. Helens for the last time. For the same excellent purpose he desired to help the year before, Bugle-major Jacobs had persuaded Ronald to get up and captain a scratch Isle of Wight Rugby team against a visiting team, captained by R. Watney. The weather was fortunately a great contrast to that of the year before, and the attendance was good. The visiting team won, but it was a hard struggle. Ronald always threw himself into a game of this kind, got up on the spur of the moment and including many inexperienced players, just as keenly as into an International match, and it was fitting that his last game before the War should be of this simple kind. It was the last time that any of the family saw him play, and on that small ground the looker-on could appreciate the methods of his leadership. ‘Now’s your chance’ I remember hearing him say, as he saw an opening in front of one of his men, and then ‘Too late’ as the inexperienced player failed to take advantage of it. And in this and all that he said and did there was the quietness spoken of by Alfred Ollivant in ‘The Cost’ :—

‘The strain, the ferocity, the contortions and grimaces of

others who indulge in that heroic and elemental tussle which is Rugby football were not for him'—words amply supported by the illustration facing p. 230.

He was with us at St. Helens Cottage from the 14th to the 20th, and in the evenings there were the usual family charades. A counterfeit Ronald picked his team and a member of the family was shown playing a trick on his anxious wife in order to become a member of it; while another scene took us to Mather and Platt's, where Joe Mundy expostulated with Ronnie but finally let him go. The 'Ronald' of the charades was Dick Dugdale, whose likeness to his friend always marked him out for the part when he was with us. Simple happy memories are recalled by thoughts of Ronald and Dick at St. Helens, and it is fitting that the doings of these last days there should be of them.

In bringing to a close the account of Ronald's International play it will be of interest to summarize the whole in tabular form.

This account of Ronald's career as an International player may be fitly concluded in the words of his friend Mr. Marriott, quoted from *British Sports and Sportsmen*:—

'LIEUT. RONALD WILLIAM POULTON PALMER (Rugby), Royal Berkshire Regiment (T.F.), was the most conspicuous figure in the Rugby football world at the close of the season immediately preceding the outbreak of war. In addition to his great personality as a player, he had just captained the English team which had been victorious in all its four International matches. The following excerpt from the *Rugby Football Annual* for that season, when war was undreamt of and therefore the description is not influenced by posthumous regard, conveys some idea of his capabilities: "As a three-quarter back he is unique, and his name will be handed down as an epoch maker in that department of the game. Already he has had many imitators, but no one has equalled him in his distinctive style and opportunism. As a captain he is a born leader, never overwhelmingly confident, never flurried,

England v.	Date.	Place.	Result.	For.	Against.	Ronald's points.	Ronald's position as 3-qr.
1. France	1909 Jan. 30	Leicester	Won	22	0		R. centre
2. Ireland	1909 Feb. 13	Dublin	"	11	5		" "
3. Scotland	1909 Mar. 20	Richmond	Lost	8	18		" "
4. Wales	1910 Jan. 15	Twickenham	Won	11	6		L. wing
5. Scotland	1911 Mar. 18	"	"	13	8		R. centre
6. Wales	1912 Jan. 20	"	"	8	0		" "
7. Ireland	1912 Feb. 10	"	"	15	0	3 (1 try)	" "
8. Scotland	1912 Mar. 16	Inverleith	Lost	3	8		" "
9. S. Africa	1913 Jan. 4	Twickenham	"	3	9	3 (1 try)	L. centre
10. Wales	1913 Jan. 18	Cardiff	Won	12	0	4 (dr. goal)	" "
11. France	1913 Jan. 25	Twickenham	"	20	0	3 (1 try)	" "
12. Ireland	1913 Feb. 8	Dublin	"	15	4		" "
13. Scotland	1913 Mar. 15	Twickenham	"	3	0		" "
14. Wales	1914 Jan. 17	"	"	10	9		" "
15. Ireland	1914 Feb. 14	"	"	17	12		" "
16. Scotland	1914 Mar. 21	Inverleith	"	16	15	3 (1 try)	" "
17. France	1914 Apr. 13	Colombes, near Paris	"	39	13	20 (4 tries converted)	" "
Totals . . .				226	107	36	

and always at his best in pulling his team together when the score is against them. These attributes were fully seen in all our international victories last season, as in each match at certain periods of the game the points were against England." He was in wonderful form all through what proved to be his last season. Against Scotland and France we have vivid recollections of his initiative and combination with Watson, Oakeley, Dingle, and Lowe. Alas! only one of the five is now alive. . . .

'Well, his useful life, so full of promise, has been

ungrudgingly given for us. . . . *Sans peur et sans reproche* may well be written of him. Though carried off in the flower of his age, his pure, unselfish life leaves a high standard for future generations at Oxford to aim at.'

R. W. P. P.

(Killed in the Trenches.)

Ronald is dead; and we shall watch no more
 His swerving swallow-flight adown the field
 Amid eluded enemies, who yield
 Room for his easy passage, to the roar
 Of multitudes enraptured, who acclaim
 Their country's captain slipping toward his goal,
 Instant of foot, deliberate of soul—
 'All's well with England; Poulton's on his game.'

Aye, all is well: our orchard smiling fair;
 Our Oxford not a wilderness that weeps;
 Our boys tumultuously merry where
 Amongst old elms his comrade spirit keeps
 Vigil of love. All's well. And over there,
 Amid his peers, a happy warrior sleeps.

ALFRED OLLIVANT.

The Spectator, May 22, 1915.



RONALD SWERVING AWAY FROM ANDRÉ, IN THE ANGLO-FRENCH MATCH, APRIL 13, 1914.

INTERNATIONAL FOOTBALL: 1909-1914.

BY A. C. M. CROOME.

Ronnie is not the only University footballer who has got his International cap before his Blue. The distinction is shared by W. Cobby of Cambridge. Both were markedly individual players, and in neither case does the action of the English Selection Committee prove beyond possibility of controversy that the judgement of the University captains was badly at fault. Ronnie's selection to play against France at Leicester, on Jan. 30, 1909, was based on his play for the Harlequins, which had made a deep impression on the captain, Adrian Stoop, who rightly carried much weight in the Council Chamber of the Rugby Football Union. The English team did not exactly cover itself with glory in the match. Several of the men seemed to be on the look-out for opportunities of 'stunting' and were inclined to omit the solid work which is essential as the preliminary to a display of fireworks. It was quite a long time before the three-quarter line got going, and all through the game the quickness of the French forwards was liable to spoil their movements. Ronnie played inside right, the other centre being Tarr. Simpson and Mobbs, the latter destined to earn high distinctions in the War, were the wings. Simpson played outside right during the first half, but subsequently changed places with Mobbs, and the rearrangement worked well. Tarr was easily the best of the four. He scored a couple of tries himself, and had a hand in two others, nor were any of the mistakes in passing obviously due to him. Ronnie was generally regarded as showing immense promise, but it was considered that on some occasions he trusted too much, on others too little, to his own peculiar powers. A player of his type is always open to criticism of that kind. Although French teams have frequently shown that their attack is formidable there still exists a feeling that the selected representatives of the older unions ought not to allow

them to score. On this occasion they several times came unpleasantly near to crossing the line, and the English team owed its clean sheet at the finish to the opportunism in defence which brought Poulton and Mobbs to the assistance of Jackett, the hard-pressed full-back.

Ronnie's retention of his place for the Irish match was due at least as much to the defensive work done by him in his first International, as to the success which he achieved in attack. Tarr could not play against Ireland, and his place at inside left was taken by C. C. G. Wright, who always played outside for Cambridge. But, as has already been noted, a great three-quarter can play anywhere on the line. The match was won by the pace of the three wingers, and Ronnie, who might almost be considered a fourth. Again the inside left was the star artist. Wright played magnificently, and the other three gave him capital support. Ronnie had no chance to score himself, but he pleased the critics greatly by his persistency in stopping the rushes of the Irish forwards. He helped to get one of the three English tries by joining in the manœuvre which he enjoyed above all others. Wright got away and by all the rules of strategy should have passed to his fellow-centre. Ronnie encouraged the opposing three-quarters to mark him, and when they were all on the top of him, a wide pass to the outside, Palmer, did the trick.

The result of the Irish match raised confident hopes that Scotland would have to leave the Calcutta Cup behind them at Richmond. But the tradition that Scottish teams play more effectively in England than they do at Inverleith was followed; and, after England had established a lead of five points, the Scottish forwards took charge for some twenty minutes. Tennant, their brilliant half-back, and others of the outsides, joined in the swift fierce rushes of the forwards, and three apparently soft tries were scored against England. For the rest of the time the English three-quarters were constantly trying to wipe off the adverse balance of points, but the tackling was strenuous and what luck there was favoured the

defence. It was not a game in which three-quarter backs had much chance of distinguishing themselves, and all that can be said of Ronnie's share in it is that if he did nothing to increase his reputation, he could not justly be blamed for dangerous unorthodoxy or expensive mistakes. When he did get the ball it was generally after slow heeling by the forwards and subsequent slow passing. But, even so, the Scotsmen found him slippery to hold.

In accordance with the form shown during the season 1908-1909, and with his performances for Oxford, especially in the great game at Queen's, Ronnie was duly selected to play against Wales in the first International match decided at Twickenham. It was a vigorous and rather unpleasant game, frequently interrupted by the referee's whistle and ensuing free kicks. Ronnie figured at outside left, with Solomon as his centre and Birkett and Chapman on the other wing. As sometimes happens, the English line of attack went entirely one way. Whenever the forwards managed to give the ball to the backs the preliminary scrummage had invariably been formed close to the left-hand touch-line. Consequently the passing was to the right: Ronnie got not a single pass the whole afternoon. When he was in action he spent most of his time stopping the Welsh forwards. Mostly his job was to fall on the ball, but twice he managed to pick it up and elude a number of tacklers in his inimitable way, and several times he got in useful kicks from awkward positions. To one thinking things over after the game it was rather remarkable that Wales had lost. The probable explanation is that the English team was man for man considerably the faster. It was also very well served by the strategic moves of Stoop at outside half. It was a most thrilling spectacle to watch, but the incidents of it are not of surpassing interest for the purposes of this book. Possibly because Ronnie was, through no fault of his own, out of the picture against Wales, he was not chosen for the Irish match, which resulted in a pointless draw, nor did he play against France in Paris when England had quite a hard

match and won by a comparatively small margin. He had no share in the victory over Scotland at Inverleith which gave England the championship, even though a substitute had to be found for one of the originally selected three-quarters.

In the next season, 1911, Ronnie did not appear in the team until he was welcomed back to his place at inside right in the Scottish match at Twickenham by his colleagues and by an enormous crowd of spectators. The game started in surprising fashion, Scotland scoring a rather fortunate try in the first few minutes. The Englishmen might easily have got rattled, but they were very shrewdly captained by Gotley, who had Stoop, Birkett, and Poulton immediately behind him and all at the very top of their form. The two centre three-quarters had to do more than their fair share of defensive work, but their speed and stamina soon enabled them to turn defence into attack, and then it was all up with Scotland. Ronnie made one mistake of judgement: he passed once when he probably had the better chance of scoring himself. Otherwise his play was technically perfect. It was also characterized by his own peculiar and baffling tricks. The crowd fully appreciated his play and fairly rose at him during and after the match. This was the first International in which he had been enabled by circumstances and opportunity to give of his very best. Thenceforward his place in England's best Fifteen was absolutely assured.

The English team won their first match of 1912 against Wales at Twickenham comfortably enough at the finish. But for a long time the outsides, acting, no doubt, under instructions, tried to make their superiority in pace tell by kicking into the open instead of running with the ball. The result was that Bancroft, the Welsh full-back, seized his opportunities to play the game of his life. There was less than twenty minutes to go when they began to mend their ways. Then Ronnie, who was still playing inside right, set Chapman going, and backed him up to take the return pass and change the line of attack to the left. As a matter of

course he found Pillman lying handy to pick up anything that might be going, and Brougham intelligently cut in behind Pillman to take a pass on the right and leave the defence standing. That settled the issue, but England scored again when Ronnie found touch a yard from the line and Pym dived over it from one of the ensuing scrums. This was the match before which Stoop solemnly buried a leek thrown at him by a Welsh spectator while his team was being photographed. Although England's first try was a perfect beauty, the outstanding feature of the back play was the defence of the centre three-quarters, Poulton and Birkett. The Welsh outsiders made no mistakes, but they were never allowed to put into practice any of the artful and complicated movements which they had undoubtedly prepared and practised. They simply had not the time. Their opposite numbers were on to them in a flash, and forced them either to act where they stood or to run sideways into the bottleneck. Welsh cleverness has seldom been reduced to such complete impotence.

After this victory it was natural that practically the same team should be chosen for the match against Ireland, also played at Twickenham. But two changes were made outside the scrummage. Chapman could not play and Roberts took his place, while Coverdale was substituted for Stoop at outside half, as being better suited to cope with the rushing tactics of Irish forwards. And the Irish forwards did rush that day, at least for the first half of the game ; in the second they had more or less exhausted themselves, and England scored four tries after half-time, a substantial addition to the one which was all they could manage previously. That try was the result of the tactics which had failed against Bancroft. Ronnie, playing inside right, punted high and Roberts followed up to secure the ball and fall over in the corner. Possibly more points might have been scored before half-time if Coverdale, Birkett, and Poulton had not been a trifle inclined to hang on to the ball too long. But that is hypercriticism. The great merit of the English back play was the really amazing speed with which attacks were

delivered. For instance, there was one movement started by Coverdale and Poulton which seemed to have culminated in narrow failure when Brougham was downed in the left-hand corner. But before the spectators quite realized what had happened Roberts was in on the extreme right, and Coverdale and Poulton had again been active in the interval. On the whole Ronnie played even better in this match than he had against Wales, and it was appropriate that he should score the final try with one of his most delightful runs.

After this the English team were hot favourites against Scotland, but things went wrong for them, and it must be admitted that the majority of the men played just a trifle below par. Moreover they early lost King, one of their most useful forwards. Although they had the wind against them in the first half Scotland did most of the attacking, and at half time there was no score. So far Ronnie had done well in defence and had also made four or five characteristic dashes through the Scottish forwards. Unfortunately his passing was less accurate than usual and all possibly useful transfers to Roberts were ruled 'forward'. After half-time England scored first, Brougham making an extraordinary run from his own goal line to the other end, but Scotland were soon at it again and ultimately won by a goal and a try to a try. The quickness of the Scottish forwards and the unusual slowness of the English halves gave the three-quarters few chances to get off before the tacklers were on to them. Ronnie did not play in the match against France in Paris, and was not unlucky to be out of it, for the ground was grassless and as hard as iron.

So far Ronnie's career as an International player had been successful without being extraordinarily remarkable. Henceforward he was to be the dominating personality of the English team in every match. The first played in 1913 was the memorable game between England and South Africa at Twickenham. The pace, weight, and muscular strength of the South Africans were quite unusual. They were perfectly trained and they required

no teaching in the science of Rugby Football. Against this combination of qualities the English backs were on the whole ineffective, though Lowe and Coates, the wing three-quarters, played with any amount of fire and dash, and the halves, behind beaten forwards, did as well as could be expected. But Ronnie was inspired that day. The South Africans knew all about him, and marked him for all they were worth, but times and again he slipped them. They had to guess and guessed wrong. Who that saw it will ever forget that run of his which produced the first score of the match. The opening was made for him by quick heeling from the scrummage and smart passing by the halves. But two South Africans reached him almost simultaneously with the ball. They found only themselves when they dived for his heels. In a flash he was through the three-quarters and had left the full-back standing on the wrong foot to watch him gallop under the posts. Shortly afterwards he made a similar, but longer, and, if possible, more brilliant run. He got the ball at a place short of half-way, and somehow slipped through the forwards. A feint to kick beat one three-quarter and a swerve another. He was clear and men's pulses were beating in time with his flying feet. But the swerve had lost him a yard or two of ground, and McHardy's great pace and fine resolution enabled him to overhaul him and pull him down from behind. Things had happened so rapidly that no Englishman could get up to complete the barely missed try. Shortly afterwards the South Africans equalized and finally a couple of penalty goals gave them the match. They never played quite so well again, or came so near to being beaten by the individual efforts of one supreme player.

After this the English team had to go to Cardiff and play on a ground which looked like the entrance of a water-meadow after a herd of cows had been forced to pass through it against their will. England had never won at Cardiff, and the conditions underfoot were all against them. But they did the trick this time. Ronnie dropped a

beautiful goal, and was the prime cause of a try by a piece of dribbling worthy of G. O. Smith. Even when he was not personally engaged in an attacking movement he contributed indirectly to the success attending it, because at least two Welshmen had to be kept out of action to watch him. This enabled Davies to present Coates with a try by missing out the heavily-marked centre three-quarter and slinging a long high pass to the wing. Neither in defence nor attack did Ronnie make a mistake throughout the match, and the way he kept his feet and retained his power to start quickly and swerve bewilderingly on the slough of mud, caused the Welsh critics, as severe as they are well-informed, to become quite lyrical in their eulogies of his play.

In the match against France the Englishmen were successful in proportion to their superior strength, and had an afternoon's bad practice. The effect was apparent when they met Ireland in Dublin. Certainly they won by a handsome margin of points (15-4), but their display was by no means convincing. We have now arrived at the 'even Poulton' period of Ronnie's football history. Henceforward the critics, commenting on an unsatisfactory exhibition given by his side, invariably put the qualifying word before his name when they record that his play was not immaculate. This time 'even Poulton' dropped some passes. But of course he did all sorts of brilliant things as well, especially when he put Coates in at the finish of a long corkscrew run. The International season finished with a narrow victory over Scotland at Twickenham, and Ronnie was as hard worked as ever he had been in a game of football. The halves played to him exclusively, and so did the opposing tacklers. The pressure caused him to misfield a pass or two, but otherwise he was up to his normal standard of excellence. He it was who made the run which produced the only score of the match, and his tackling was superb. The crowd were wild with delight, for England had not beaten Wales, Ireland, and Scotland all in a single season for many years. None had any

doubt about the individual player best entitled to wear the 'Triple Crown' if it had actual existence.

The first of England's matches in 1914 was played against Wales at Twickenham, and a very remarkable match it was. The Welshmen had the ball most of the time, and rarely did the wrong thing with it. Yet England won by 10 points to 9. Pace was the determining factor in the result—Pace and Poulton. Players, spectators, and Press agreed with singular unanimity that the victory of the English team was mainly due to its captain. And yet he nearly had the bad luck to give the game away. Wales scored first, Hirst dropping a wonderful goal from the touch line. England soon took the lead with a goal kicked from a try which shall be described later. The Welsh forwards, who packed and dribbled magnificently, worked the ball into the English 25, where one of the English halves, neither of whom was equal to the great occasion, passed wildly. Ronnie did good work by securing the ball, but he did not get enough loft on his punt, which was charged down by Watts. The ball bounced kindly for the charging forward, who fell over the line for a try near the posts. Thenceforward England always looked to be the more likely to score, partly because the Welshmen, having got the lead luckily, were trying their utmost to sit on it. They even condescended to give away free kicks in places out of range of their goal, sooner than let the English out-sides have a chance to get going. Time was slipping away and attack after attack broke down. Suddenly Ronnie punted high and followed up his kick. He rushed Bancroft. Pillman, Brown, and Watson carried on until Ronnie got the ball again and punted sideways. This fairly tied up the Welsh defence, and Brown put a clever foot-pass over the line for Pillman to touch down after outpacing Bancroft. That was a clever bit of opportunism, but it was nothing to England's first try, which resulted from one of Ronnie's most unforgettable efforts. The Welsh forwards had the ball in the middle of the ground, and his first attempt to stop their combined rush failed. He doubled back and picked it up off their toes. At the moment he was running the wrong

way, but somehow he slipped the men who apparently had him at their mercy. The next thing anybody knew was that he had flitted through the thick of the Welsh team like a butterfly and was bearing down on Bancroft. He beat the back with a sideways punt secured by his own forwards, who passed back to him. Again he slipped the defence and on the line gave the ball to Brown, who carried it, and incidentally two Welshmen, over for a glorious try. Ronnie's defence was as good as his attack that day. Thanks to him, Chapman, and Watson—Lowe never got a chance of doing anything remarkable—the Welsh three-quarters were made to look very mediocre performers. The forwards were the danger; but their rushes, their dribbles, and their passing movements were stopped at the earliest possible moment by intuitive anticipation, absolute accuracy in fielding, and—it goes without saying—unflinching courage.

Against Ireland, also at Twickenham, the team was strengthened by the inclusion of the Navy halves, Oakeley and Davies. The game was a contest between old-fashioned and modern methods. The Irishmen relied on the driving power of their pack, supported by a succession of kicks into touch by their outsides. Contrariwise, the English team constantly endeavoured to get the ball loose and to score by a series of quick passes delivered and taken at full speed. But they rather overdid their trickiness on this occasion. It is impossible for the members of an International team under present conditions to acquire that intimate knowledge of one another which was one of the great assets possessed by Gallaher's New Zealanders. When a man passes in the less obvious direction, his dodge must be expected by his own side, unexpected by the opponents, if it is to succeed. Another cause that kept the English score down was the fact that, with the exception of their captain, the English three-quarters were not quite at their best. While they were fresh the Irish forwards took charge, but at the finish they were run off their legs, by their fierce rushes and their persistency in getting back to help the defence

against the combined runs of the Englishmen. Lloyd soon dropped one of his extra-special goals, and wild passing between the English halves—their one mistake of the afternoon—gave the opportunity for a fifty yards rush to the Irish forwards, from which an unconverted try resulted. Then from a scrummage Oakeley passed back to Davies. By the time the ball reached the outside half Ronnie was at his side. Together the two charged straight forward and at the right moment Davies handed the ball to his partner. The defenders, with the exception of Lloyd, who knew what was coming, streamed to the right; a reverse pass to Davies and a long throw to the wing gave Roberts a clear run in at the corner, Lloyd arriving to tackle him just as he crossed. Then another try, gained by bewildering back-play before half-time; and, after the interval, so soon as the slightly refreshed energy of the Irish forwards was exhausted, England took charge. Although they threw away numberless chances they scored three more tries, one by Ronnie's pet trick of getting himself missed out by his fellow centre. Ireland were consoled by a surprise try gained after some particularly fine kicking by Lloyd, who, in spite of Ronnie's presence on the ground, was perhaps the star player of the day. By the way, one of England's later tries was gained by an unfulfilled threat to repeat the 'scissors' trick (p. 218). Davies beat the defence by a whole series of dummy passes to the supporting Ronnie, and went through on his own. Meanwhile, Lloyd was hurriedly occupying a strategic position to stop the wing three-quarter in the corner.

No such crowd had ever been seen at Inverleith as that which assembled to see Scotland tackle the best Fifteen which had represented England for many a long day. The issue was decided by a single point, England scoring two goals and two tries to a goal, a dropped goal, and two tries. But an unprejudiced spectator must admit that the winners might easily have had a more substantial margin of points to their credit, and never were in any real danger

of being beaten, although the Scots made a remarkable rally in the closing period of the game. The English centre three-quarters gave a wonderful exhibition. Ronnie was at his best, and Watson was at least as good as he, equally quick and guileful. Whenever they got the ball there was always a chance that a try would result, particularly as Lowe on the right wing was at his fastest and slipperiest. The strong wind which blew straight down the ground was all against the visiting team, because the more complicated the machine, the more likely it is to be put out of gear by comparatively trivial causes. Scotland had the wind at their backs in the first half, and all the ground which England could gain by a series of half a dozen quick passes, perfectly timed and unerringly fielded, would be retaken by a single long punt into touch. Scotland scored first, but Ronnie and Watson put Lowe in for the equalizing try before half-time. Immediately after the interval Scotland got the lead again through a typical forward rush. But during the next twenty minutes the English team gave a dazzling exhibition of modern Rugby. Lowe twice and Ronnie once scored at the finish of movements in which practically every Englishman bore some part, and the match seemed all over. But Scotland twice reached the enemy's 25, and each time scored. Once Bowie, their scrum half, dropped a clever goal, and the other time he fairly bamboozled the English centre three-quarters with a dummy pass and slipped between them to put Will in under the posts. All through the game Bowie had played quite extraordinarily well. There was now but a short time to play, and before a couple of minutes had passed Pillman broke his leg. A badly led side might have broken down, but the Englishmen carried on with supreme confidence and kept the Scots on the defensive till the whistle blew. At least twice they came near to increasing their one-point lead.

At the end of the season France was decisively beaten in Paris. But the match had to be taken quite seriously. The French forwards were fast and heavy, and the whole

team showed great improvement in tackling and marking. In point of fact their three-quarters marked Ronnie and Watson almost too well for a time, with the result that Davies was able to give the wings some pretty chances. Towards the end of the game the defence distributed itself more evenly, and Ronnie skipped through twice. In this match the Frenchmen had the satisfaction of scoring first, and of regaining the lead after England had equalized, while their third try was the result of a passing movement which could not have been better executed by the English halves and three-quarters.

This account of Ronnie in International football has failed dismally unless it has brought out clearly his gradual but sure progress from strength to strength. He was given his cap while he was still little more than a boy, and lacked experience. But he never played a bad game for England, though at the outset he was occasionally left out of the side after being included for one of the earlier matches. Latterly, when the extent of his powers was fully realized, the English team went on to the field purposing to play to him whenever they could. In match after match he justified their confidence. In fact it is generally believed that they had not in five years plumbed the depth of his capacity, or fully tested his gift of leadership. Nor in all those five years had any opponent caused him to lose his temper, or any referee found him question the correctness even of an obviously wrong decision.

A. C. M. C.

X

READING: 1912-1913

Many hopes perished with him. He seemed destined to become the first citizen in Reading and to exert upon a large community his singular influence for good.—*The Reading University College Review*, Sept. 1915, vii, No. 21, p. 146.

IN January 1912, just before he went to Reading, Ronald joined us for a few days at Mürren, to enjoy alpine winter sports for the third and last time. He was very successful in ice-hockey, and won, I think, every event he competed for in the assorted sports got up one evening at the hotel. I remember well his desperate struggle in the pillow-fight with Tom Gillespie.¹ Dr. Bullock, the Rugby forward, suddenly appeared at Mürren and I happened to be present when Ronald came upon him all unexpectedly: 'Why it's old Bulljohn!' he said, with a few good blows on the chest, given and received in that quiet spot as a token of the camaraderie of the team.

One of the scenes in that happy time is shown on the accompanying plate, from a snapshot by Capt. N. Whatley. 'Good fun it was'—in the words of another of our party, the Rev. W. J. Carey—'It isn't really gone; it's a permanent possession of happy memory.'

After returning from Mürren for the match England *v.* Wales on Jan. 20, Ronald was engaged in packing and going over to Reading to arrange his little house at 16 Portland Place. When on Jan. 27 he first went to sleep there we walked together to the station, going by the canal paths and talking of his future life and of the

¹ Lt. K. O. Scottish Borderers, killed Oct. 18, 1914.



RONALD AND JANET AT MÜRREN. SKIERS PICNICKING IN THE SNOW.
From a photograph by N. Whatley, Jan., 1912.

past. We were both feeling the big break in his life and prolonged the little walk as much as we could.

Ronald's account of 1912, the last written by him, was read on Christmas Day, all the family being present and reading their accounts, except Edward and his wife, who had left the day before. Ronald wrote to his friend Neville Gorton on Dec. 24 :—

'We have here now for the first time all the family—five children and three in-laws and a baby and four dogs. Not a bad crowd!

'We had a jolly time at the 'Varsity match. Keith, Billy, Stephen, G. M. Hamilton, self, and Henry Bowlby went with Stephen's people to *The Eldest Son*—Galsworthy—very interesting.

'To-night I am going with father to the Magdalen Carols, a most ripping evening.

'Goodbye and good luck. If you are ever down south remember that I live at 16 Portland Place, Reading, and I have *two* spare beds.'

This was the last of three Christmas Eves on which Ronald and I had gone to the Carols, and it was Ronald's last Christmas at home. His story of the year gives a good account of his new life in Reading :—

'This year has seen the end of my Oxford days and the beginning of a more or less definite business career. I must at the outset confess that certain misgivings that I had at the start as to whether this work would be congenial or interesting to me, have been removed after some ten months' experience of it. The personal side of the work appeals very greatly to me, and of course, working side by side with large numbers of men and boys day by day tends to emphasize this side in one's mind. At the same time the business itself is very interesting. The methods of manufacture, the various ingredients, the ideas of the managers, and the peculiarities of all and every person on the place, have to be studied. The work, all manual, and often extremely mechanical, tends at times to become monotonous, but when this is so, one can move on. For instance, I have done for the last three weeks an operation which is performed eight times in five minutes—and this without a pause of any kind, while I am in there.

'But the work of the year, in the Factory, has been one of training, and of picking up in a practical manner all the knowledge, obtained apparently experimentally, and often in a somewhat haphazard way, which cannot be found in books or elsewhere. At the same time I have come to know a fair number of men and boys, and to find a large number of good friends among them. I have also had chances now and then of seeing something of the engineering side of the work, and I am looking forward greatly to doing more of this.

'Outside the Factory, I have been engaged in various ways in Reading. It was not long before I was roped into various jobs—too many as I now find. I am at present

Captain of the Reading Athletic Club.

2nd Lieut. in the 4th Royal Berks.

Connected with College Boys' Club in Newtown.

On Committee of N.U. of Old Scholars Club for Reading.

And all these take up too much time.

'My real interest is the College Boys' Club. This is run theoretically by the College, practically almost entirely by myself. Here I have the opportunity of getting to know the factory boy away from his work (the necessary discipline of a factory preventing one doing anything in work hours), and incidentally I get a large amount of knowledge of what the typical boy thinks of his work and his employers, and of his general outlook on life. They don't realize my position, and most of them think I am destined in the distant future to be an under-manager. So luckily they are delightfully unrestrained in their remarks and opinions.

'The constitution of the Club had to suffer some reconstruction, so as to allow me to take part in it, and I was put on the Committee. What really happens is that I go down twice a week (it is only open twice) and the College sends down some helpers with more or less regularity. But it is sadly hampered by want of helpers, and better accommodation. The week-end camp was a great success, and I hope we may have another this next summer.

'St. Giles' School has recently started an Old Boys' Club, and I had to make a speech at the "Kick off". It will be interesting to see how it works.

'I have found the Factory Recreation Club very interesting and useful. During the summer we had lots of splendid cricket games, and it was very pleasant going

down there in the late evenings, practising at the nets, and playing rag stump cricket matches.

'The Reading Athletic Club was very busy during the summer. We had a Committee meeting almost every fortnight, and about five evening sports meetings, and also a dinner in the summer. This club is flourishing chiefly in its old grey-headed members, who tell us their experiences in the early forties. The young members, for whom the Club should exist, are not very numerous. But we console ourselves by saying that track athletics is dead all over England ever since betting on the course was abolished and fathers ceased to train up their sons, like whippets, to run in boys' races, going round about the country, and dyeing their boys' hair a different colour every day.

'The 4th Berks. Battalion is a highly efficient battalion of Territorial Infantry, but if compared with any other standard than that of the Territorials, it must fall far short. I joined it, with the mistaken idea that in no other position could I so place myself that my training at Oxford might be made use of in a future war. But soon after I bought my uniform I discovered that I could have enrolled myself with one of Haldane's numerous reserves, one of the many patches, comprising old volunteers, old soldiers, Crimean veterans, and any living Pre-Napoleonic and Pre-Waterlooan Centenarians, which go to make up the Volunteer Territorial quilt.

'I fear to confess that I have little interest in things military, and thus it is fortunate that I warned the C.O. on joining that I should have no time to help in the Headquarters work. A territorial officer is bound by regulations to do ten drills a year, to attend camp for a minimum of eight days, and to shoot a simple musketry course. Besides he is expected by the War Office and by his Commanding Officer to do the following things:—

- (1) Pay uniform £35 (Govt. returns £20).
- (2) Pay innumerable subscriptions to Goose-funds, Prize shoots, Boot Clubs, Sergeants' Mess, &c., &c.
- (3) To go to one or two staff rides of four days—a long week-end. These take place usually in the Midlands.
- (4) To go to two week-end camps, Friday to Monday, at Churn.
- (5) To appear every Tuesday to help in the drill, after January.
- (6) To lecture N.C.O's periodically.

And several other extras. I ask is it fair? Anyhow I foresee that in my case the War Office regulations will be my guides, philosophers, and friends. The camp, however, was the best of fun, as the officers are a very pleasant lot, but it is slightly embarrassing to command a Company which includes two Sergeants with South African war experience, and a Colour-Sergeant with a Volunteer long-service decoration.

'Large numbers of evenings were spent in going to dinner parties, &c., in Reading, though I am glad to say that lately I have got fairly clear, chiefly I venture to think because I have never replied with a call, such a thing being impossible for me.

'Indoors the house needed a certain amount of arranging at the start, and slight improvements are always being made. I was always bothered with correspondence, which is annoying as my spare time is so limited. Even on my spare evenings, I only get about two hours, as one must go to bed early, when one has to get up at 6.0. My free evenings worked out on an average about two every three weeks, so I was only able to get a little serious reading or writing done. But in the New Year I hope to make arrangements so as to get two evenings a week to myself.

'This gives a rough idea of a very busy year. Full it has been, but everything has taken place in one spot, and so every day one's interest increases. There is certainly plenty of room in Reading in which to do things, and this year has only shown that unless one is careful, one gets saddled with too many jobs, and one appears a fraud in most. The New Year is an exciting thought for me, and with the hope that we shall all surmount its difficulties I shall close this account.'

To Ronald's remarks on his Army experiences it is only necessary to add that his Commission as Second Lieutenant in the Territorial Force attached to the 4th Battalion, Princess Charlotte of Wales's (Royal Berkshire Regiment), was granted June 3, 1912, and dated from Apr. 30 of the same year. The Report of the O.C. dated July 27, 1912, gives 'Very Good' for 'Industry, punctuality, and attention' and for 'General proficiency attained in the subjects of the course' of instruction from July 1-27, at the Dépôt of the Regiment, at Reading.

Ronald was gazetted Lieutenant July 24, 1913.

In accordance with his uncle's wishes Ronald rented 16 Portland Place and engaged a man and his wife to look after him and it. With his strong desire for simplicity he was at first unwilling to take a house and to be looked after so thoroughly; he would much have preferred going into lodgings. He often spoke to his friend Dick Dugdale and to me on the subject. But in the end he saw the wisdom of his uncle's advice, and, as he wished to entertain and put up friends as often as they could come, it was obviously by far the most convenient arrangement. Then there was the motor-bicycle to be cleaned, and later on the motor-car to be cleaned and driven, and in all these things as well as the garden Brown was able to give him very necessary help. The association meant too an addition to the large circle of his friends. The words written by Mrs. Brown when the sad tidings came—'We loved him well'—summed up memories of the three years in which they had been with him.

No. 16 Portland Place is a small £36 house, with the dining-room opening into a little garden at the back, just 800 yards from the Factory gates and less than 200 from the Reading College, formerly 'The Acacias' where his mother had lived from childhood till her marriage.

From Alfred Ollivant.

'The last time I saw him to speak to was at Reading in 1913. I was standing in an archway on a wet day with a little crowd of others waiting to go over Huntley and Palmers' works when I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was Ronald. He asked me in to supper. I remember he was delightfully shy and apologetic about the luxury of the very humble little house in which he was living. He quite clearly thought that I should expect him to be living in a doss-house!'

With all these feelings about the house in which he lived by himself, Ronald had thoughts of the time when he should be married and would need a permanent home,

which he had quite determined should be as near as possible to the Factory. Mrs. Harrison Jones remembers a conversation with him in 1912, in the course of which he said that he had been thinking of an old house, Watlington House, opposite St. John's Church, and only 350 yards from the Factory main entrance, and that he would very much like to have it at some future time.

Settling down in his little house in Reading, with endless work and engagements filling up and over-filling his time, Ronald had hardly any opportunity, outside his Boys' Club, for the fun and games with children and young people which had entered so largely into his earlier life. He told us of some pleasant talk with two little girls he overtook on their way to school when he was walking to the Factory after breakfast. But this delight was soon ended when it became evident from their cold standoffishness that they had been told not to enter into conversation with a strange man! Things improved later on as he came to make many friends in Reading. The following letter written in the summer of 1912 shows a friendship, which I am sure gave him much pleasure, with a little girl of twelve, Joyce Haslam, who had written to him on fancy note-paper. He had asked her to go in for a Jack and Jill race with him at the St. John's Gymkhana, but she had sprained her ankle and had written to tell him of another partner.

'DEAR JOYCE,

'I don't see why you should be the only person who has beautiful birds on the top of her paper, so here are mine. This is the greater Dodo. They are very wild, but delightful when you make pets of them. But their beaks take up too much room; and must always be left with their umbrellas in the hall, when they come out calling.

'Yes, please thank your mother very much and say that I shall be round as quickly as possible, but I fear I shall have to go off early to do a drill—you see I am a soldier of the King (now and then).

'But will you bring or get my fair and beautiful lady partner, or will she not be there?

'What very beautiful writing you have got. I suppose that comes from learning the guitar. And now I know how to spell Gwyneth.

'Now you know I haven't time really to write all this, but I feel that it is bad luck that you can't run in the sports (like this. [Pen and ink sketch.] This isn't very good. You see your hair is not really half so long and beautiful as this, and altogether this is too flattering of you!!)

'Well good-bye and give my respects to your sisters, and accept love from

'Your obedient servant,

'RONALD W. POULTON.'

Living so near Oxford it was easy to see a good deal of his old friends. Keith Rae was still in residence, but thinking of his future career. Ronald wrote to him from Marlston, June 9, 1912:—

'MY DEAR KEITH,

'Thank you ever so much for your little letter. I feel I must answer it, and I want you to realize that such feelings are at any rate reciprocal.

'It has been good to know you, good purely from the point of view of enjoyment of your society, and good from the strength it has given me, at various times. That is particularly why it would be a crying shame if you were not to undertake some walk of life in which the personal relationship was of great importance. I don't know what the result of the Marlborough interview is, but what I say is—only do the Public School idea *if you are keen on it*.

'If not do the job you are keen on, i.e. what Alec suggested. Those are my humble opinions. And now we must take care, that though possibly far away we see something of each other now and then. We aren't good letter writers so we must make it up by actual visiting. I shall see you next Sunday if I can, to find out how you got on.

'Yours affectionately.'

Their letters evidently crossed, for the next day Ronald wrote from Reading, having heard that the Marlborough mastership was decided:—'So you've taken it on. Good. It will show you how you like it, won't it? I am so glad anyhow that you have something definite settled.'

A few days after writing to Keith, Ronald came to us for the week-end and played a part in an amusing well-remembered scene. It happened that on that Saturday night Keith Rae and W. T. Collier, who shared rooms, were expecting a raid from some men to whom they had administered a well-deserved reproof. Stephen Reiss helped them to get together a defence party, three of whom came late and were mistaken for the raiders by Mr. Rae, who was staying with his son and happened at the moment of their arrival to be alone in an outer room. With icy politeness he asked the leader, Norman Smith of Balliol, what they wanted.

'Rae.'

'I am Mr. Rae.'

'I want Keith Rae.'

'I am sure my friends will be delighted to see you.'

The cold and dignified tone, heard through the half-open door, revealed the misunderstanding to those within, who could not restrain their laughter, thus leading to further misunderstanding, for Mr. Rae thought they were jeering at the discomfited invaders.

'Perhaps my son will introduce me to these three *gentlemen*', he said.

Keith began, 'This is Mr. Smith, father'.

'And is this *another* Mr. Smith?' said Mr. Rae, pointing to one of Norman's companions—then he realized his mistake.

But other mistakes were to follow, for soon noises were heard as though a dozen men were running upstairs. At last they thought the time had come. The door was thrown open and an apparently drunken man with his hat over his eyes rushed for Keith. Stephen, sitting next the door, hit him as hard as he could on the side of the head. It was Ronald, who could not resist the fun of impersonating the enemy when he heard that his friends, unaware of his presence in Oxford, were waiting expecting an attack. I well remember his glee in telling me the story and how I was rather surprised, for the humour was more

Hibernian than was usual with him. Mr. Rae remembers Ronald seizing Keith round the legs, and was much impressed by the instantaneous revelation of ferocity in a quiet man such as he believed Stephen to be.

Touching memories of Ronald in the summer of 1912 were recalled by his mother's nurse:—

‘ June 8, 1915.

‘ I too, dear, have a very sweet memory of the last time I saw him. It was at Marlston. There was a large party: a storm was coming, the visitors all hasting away. I was on the lawn; Mrs. Palmer called “Nurse, come in, it's going to rain”. Mr. Ronald at once came to me, said “Let me help you, Nurse”, drew my arm within his, helped me up the little hill, and took me right in, then wished me good night. Can I ever forget that bright happy face? Oh, he was good and kind to every one. How proud you both must be that you were parents of such a son! No one that knew him can ever forget him I am sure.

‘ Reggie cut his photo out of the paper and framed it. Of course, dear, it is not very good but we like it.

‘ Ever yours affectionately,

‘ Nurse Bitmead.’¹

There is no doubt that Ronald attempted too much in Reading, keeping at high pressure for too many hours in the day and getting insufficient sleep. His brother writes:—

‘ The strenuousness of playing for England required his keeping in first-class training. Instead of having long nights in bed, he had to get up at quite an early hour for his factory work, which lasted the whole day. In the evening there was frequently the boys' club, and when he got back home, he had to begin his private correspondence, which was pretty considerable in amount, as he did not employ a secretary; as far as I remember, he rarely got to bed before midnight, and I remember on more than one occasion remonstrating with him for this.’

¹ ‘ Mary Bitmead, . . . for 50 years the faithful and devoted friend and nurse in the family of the late Mr. George Palmer, M.P., of The Acacias, Reading, in her 89th year ’ (*Times*, Mar. 2, 1918).

After a year and a quarter he broke down and had to take a complete rest. Hilda wrote :—

‘A few weeks after our Easter at St. Helens Ronald came to us in Holywell for a week-end and we noticed that he was not looking well, being very thin and hollow-eyed. For a long time he had been short of sleep, sitting up very late and then having to be at the Factory early—I think 6.30. Then too it was quite an ordinary thing for him to act as he did on leaving St. Helens. He, Waldy, and “Wally” [Ronald’s West Highland terrier] did not start till after dinner, and rode all through the night, getting to Reading just in time to be at the Factory the next morning. On the Sunday in Holywell, after a great deal of persuasion, he had breakfast in bed and stayed in with us through the day instead of rushing off to the river with Billy Collier and other friends as he had planned. Some University Rigger players were, as it happened, coming to lunch that day, and their delight at meeting Ronald was of course very great.’

From W. T. Collier to Keith Rae at the Institute Tilley, Berlin :—

‘May 9, 1913.

‘Ronald did not come with us. They have come to the conclusion that he is suffering from a year of “late to bed and early to rise”—which I should think is probably true. His sister therefore kept him in bed in the morning and they were trying to induce him to take three weeks off—advice which I think he will probably take. It is remarkable that he should have stood a year of it so well, for he seems to manage to get all sorts of things in. Even two nights a week at his Club must be a considerable strain.’

His uncle was much perturbed by Ronald’s breakdown and at once arranged the journey described below. Italy was a new experience in Ronald’s life and his first introduction to the world of art.

From his Mother.

‘I naturally jumped at the idea of having Ronnie all to myself for a fortnight and also at George’s attractive plan for us—that we should visit the Italian Lakes where he had so often been. George took the greatest interest in

our journey and arranged all the details for us. We travelled straight through to Cadenabbia on the Lake of Como. It was perfectly delightful being and travelling with Ronald. He never got disturbed over any little contretemps which is bound to happen now and then on a long journey and one felt so absolutely contented and happy with him. And to me he was always sweet considerateness itself. I often used to think what a lucky girl she would be who became his wife.

'Ronald was not really ill; he only wanted plenty of sleep, and he got plenty on the journey for we passed all our time reading and sleeping. We were unlucky in the weather at Cadenabbia for it rained nearly every day of our week there. One day I persuaded Ronald to leave me and go for a scramble up the hillside at the back of the hotel.'

Ronald wrote on a picture postcard to his brother-in-law Dr. Ainley Walker, on May 15:—

'This is the great place! It is bung full of people and I think we shall have exhausted its possibilities by tomorrow. It is very amusing trying to keep up appearances here. I think we can only do it by dint of coming down very late for meals.'

His mother's account continues:—

'Ronald had always loved beautiful scenery but on this journey he began for the first time to take an interest in pictures and old furniture, starting with the contents of an old palace, now a museum in Cadenabbia. I had always hoped that he would begin to study the Old Masters, and now his first chance had come when we were together alone. It was this which determined us to visit Milan before our return. But first we went for a day or two to the Lago d'Iseo which Mr. Cyril Bailey had told Ronald we ought to see. We here had a lovely view of the little lake and the mountains all round. Ronald used to read in the large verandah and once I took a photograph of him with his pipe. Here too the walks were more interesting. I remember once when waiting at the landing stage for a returning steamer I told him of incidents in my early childhood and of his Uncle George's youth and how intensely interested he was.

'We then went to Milan, leaving the clouds and rain

behind us. Here we studied with the greatest energy, beginning with the early art in the great galleries and working our way up to the modern examples.

'We used to test each other's memory of what we had seen by asking questions. The whole study was a great delight and indeed a revelation to Ronald. At the Cathedral I actually struggled once more up on to the roof. One day, never to be forgotten, we went to the wonderful monastery Certosa de Pavia with the paintings in its marvellous Church and the old monks' dwellings. It is unique, and our love of it together is one of my most cherished memories.

'I remember on our last day, Corpus Christi Day, Ronald said he must go once more to the Cathedral; so he went off alone while I was packing.

'On our way back we stayed in Paris and spent a day at Versailles which Ronald had never seen. We looked at the pictures pretty thoroughly and then drove to the "Farm" and the "Petit Trianon" and tried to conjure up the ghost of Marie Antoinette. It was very sweet going over the familiar ground with him. I shall never want to go there again.

'In Paris we made quite a study of the Louvre, trying to trace the development of art as we had done in Milan. We had great talks about his going to Manchester in the autumn and the coming interview with Sir William Mather.'

The Italian journey was not the only relief from the stress and rush of Ronald's life in Reading. There were brief delightful intervals of rest and play at St. Helens in the spring and autumn of both years, when he would generally bring his friend C. T. Waldy with him. There were great hockey matches on the sands in April 1912, when all the family were at St. Helens except Margaret and her husband, who were close by at Seaview where the games were played. Then in the autumn Ronald with his chief friends Claude Evers and Dick Dugdale played golf and swam and helped us shift trees and shrubs with huge and weighty masses of earth round their roots. For the autumn of 1913 I specially reserved for his visit the moving, and raising to a higher level, of a large bay tree with an immense disk of earth and clay. These feats of garden

engineering strongly appealed to Ronald, and I always looked forward to the joy of doing them with him. This, on Aug. 27, less than a year before the War, was our last piece of holiday work together.

Ronald's letter to Janet printed on p. 265 shows clearly enough that, when once he was well again, he could not help working at high pressure.

Hilda remembered a walk by the Thames in July 1913, and how interested Ronald was in the Fours rowed by Reading men; she 'could feel that he had thrown himself heart and soul into the interests of the town and how much he already loved it'.

When he had been a few weeks in Manchester, Ronald wrote to his mother, on Oct. 28, words with which the general account of this happy strenuous section of his life may be brought to a close: 'I hear from Waldy about the Club which is going on well, but I do wish I was back there. I do love Reading.'

WORK IN HUNTLEY AND PALMERS' FACTORY

The Rev. William Temple has recalled impressions of Ronald's thoughts about future work and responsibilities. He first noticed that Ronald's mind was thus occupied soon after his visit to Repton in September 1910 (see p. 132), that is when his future career had been decided for several months and he had had time to think about it:—

'At first it was merely an anxiety to use his opportunities rightly. The fact that he was likely to have a large income seemed to him so unreasonable that this alone disposed him at first to a socialist view. Probably the sympathies evoked by, and expressed in, his work at the Rugby and Balliol Boys' Clubs encouraged this. Consequently when he first got to Reading and became familiar with the employers' point of view, the mere novelty of it carried him right away. Of course it was necessary and right that he should go through this phase, even if for the moment he was carried away by it.

'In the natural course of events I was seeing less of him at this time. He had started on his work and no longer had vacations coinciding with school holidays. He came to me at Repton for one night on September 14, 1912; for two nights on Nov. 22, 1913; for one night on March 6, 1914. Also he took me out for a drive in his two-seater car on the afternoon of a Sunday in July 1914 when I was preaching both morning and evening in Manchester. These meetings were so short that we hardly got beyond the inevitable gossip about our friends, our own doings and old reminiscences. But he was plainly recovering his balance of mind and eager for some means of bringing the different classes of society into such contact as would lead to mutual understanding. He was increasingly clear that our social evils are not due to deliberate wickedness, nor necessarily to a bad system, but to ignorance and consequently lack of sympathy between employers and employed. Consequently his earlier interest in socialism did not return; he was quite prepared that a changed spirit (due to better mutual knowledge) should lead to a changed system, but he did not care to tinker at the system until the spirit was altered.

'It must have been about the spring of 1913 that he first fully realized the possibilities of the W.E.A. as a means to what he most desired. He had been interested in its work before, but I think I am right in saying that the farewell supper to Mr. and Mrs. Mansbridge on the evening of April 22 of that year, when they were about to start for Australia, was a revelation to him. The health of the two guests was proposed by Sir Robert Morant and Mrs. Barton—a working woman from Sheffield; "National Education" was proposed by Mr. A. L. Smith of Balliol, and the Lord Chancellor of England—Lord Haldane—replied; Mr. Clynes (the Labour M.P.) proposed "The W.E.A.", and the reply was made by the Bishop of Oxford and Mr. Goodenough (organizer and "agitator" among colliers); the Secretary of the General Federation of Trade Unions—Mr. Appleton—proposed "The Universities" and Sir Henry Miers replied. It was a wonderful gathering which witnessed strikingly to the power of the W.E.A. to overcome class-distinctions and create real fellowship. Ronnie had come to London to attend it, and I am pretty sure that it clinched his growing belief that the W.E.A., more than any agency of which he knew, could help him and others in the great aim which was now consciously before

him. His experience of its work in Manchester greatly strengthened this belief and hope.

‘In the small opportunity which was all that time allowed him he had got wonderfully far himself. I have heard that one of the most prominent men in the Factory who at that time were adopting an antagonistic attitude towards the management, said that Ronnie’s death was to him the loss of a personal friend. It is impossible to doubt that just by being his own lovable self in his dealings with them, he would have allayed all bitterness and suspicion, have understood their point of view while enabling them to understand that of the employers, and so have healed any wounds in that industry at least and have shown the way to heal them in others.’

I may add—for I saw its instant germination and rapid growth—that the recognition of the employers’ point of view meant that Ronald realized, for the first time in this new sphere, the essential importance of pride in the traditions of a great business, and the inestimable value of a sense of responsibility—the conscience of power. Whatever may be true of Germany, the power to manage his own show will always command an Englishman’s best, while the socialistic ideal of a State-directed industry will very often command his worst.

The change in Ronald’s views spoken of by Mr. Temple is indicated in the following passage in a letter to Neville Gorton, written Dec. 24, 1912:—

‘This is to wish you a very happy time, next year at Mirfield. Your letter was very interesting and gave me quite an idea of your life. Quite the reverse of the hard, commercial conditions of my existence (vide all Socialist press). But really I have a very pleasant time. There is an extraordinary amount of the personal element in my work. I am with the men all day, and have really learnt to appreciate them. And the boys are simply ripping. Besides the business itself is deeply interesting: perhaps you don’t realize how exciting the manufacture of biscuits can be.’

Ronald’s interest in the W.E.A. was greatly deepened by his experience in Manchester. Early in his time there

I have heard him criticize the principles of a business management which considers the provision of general comforts of more importance than the payment of generous wages. He maintained that the employees only required the means in order to provide comfort and refinement for themselves. But later on he mixed with numbers of men for whom organized labour had secured ample wages as well as power and independence, but he looked in vain for refinement and comfort in their home life. The remedy for this, he felt, could never be found in management or anything that it might do. A change of heart was required in the worker, and for this Ronald looked to the W.E.A.

A few of the men with whom Ronald worked have written of his friendship and all that it meant to them. The following memories are recalled by Mr. W. Povey, who has worked in the Factory for over fifty years. I have often heard Ronald speak of the writer and his regard for him :—

‘From our first acquaintance your son and I were on very friendly terms. My first experience of a ride on his motor-bike was when we were at Broadmoor at a Cricket Match, and he told me I should have the ride he had promised me. I told him I wouldn’t trust myself on that thing. He said, “Well, Bill, I thought you were a good old English sportsman : I often used to take my little sister on the back of that bike.” I consented at last and he gave me a cigarette and said, “Light this fag, Bill”, and I put it in my mouth and we then started off, and I shall never forget it. I hung on to him like a leech and he said I nearly strangled him. And when we came back they all shouted “Good old Bill!”

‘On another occasion we were leaving the Cricket Ground and he said, “Are you going home, Bill?” I said “Yes, Sir,” and he asked me if I cared to ride with him, and I said I didn’t mind riding through the town with him, and he said “where shall I put you down?” and I replied, “at the pump where all teetotallers stop”.

‘One Saturday we were in a hurry to get finished at our work, and he came down to me and said, “Bill, I am come down to help you”; and I said, “I beg your pardon, sir,

but I don't require your help." But he said, "I am going to help you"; but I said, "I am in a hurry and you must clear off"; and he said, "I am not going to clear off till I like", and I said, "If you don't go you will soon be on your back". Then there was a tussle and we both came to the ground. After dinner when we were on the Cricket Ground and he was dressed in his flannels he said, "Bill, I am going to get my own back." And we had another tussle, and of course I came off second-best. "Never mind, Bill," he said. "You have got plenty of life in you yet, and it is a case of youth against age."

'One night I was leaving the firm at 7 o'clock and he said, "Bill, are you going home?" I said "Yes, Sir, and you will feel it an honour to walk home with me, won't you", and he said, "I shall, Bill", and he told me to walk on up Sidmouth Street and come in if I liked. By the time I got to his house he came out dressed in his sweater ready for a run, and we walked up Kendrick Hill talking about Rugby. When we got to the top of the hill he said, "Good night, Bill," and set off for a sprint from lamp to lamp, and down Redlands Road, indoors, and changed his clothes and back into the factory again. In the morning I asked him if that was how he trained for Rugby, and he said, "That's it, Bill, and I am in the pink of condition now and ready for you if you like"; but I said "No thanks, Sir, I am not taking any."

'I once told him that I had a good Old Dutch at home who looked after me, and he said, "Bill, I don't quite understand you"; and I told him I meant my wife; and he often used to ask me afterwards how my good Old Dutch was, as you will see he did in his letter.

'In all my eighteen years' experience as umpire to the first team at our firm I have come in contact with a great number of gentlemen, but never one whom I loved more than I did your dear son, and I cannot even now get him out of my memory. I have in my possession several letters which I have received from him, one of them congratulating me on my anniversary of fifty years' service.

'I am afraid I can't remember all his kindnesses to me. I was first introduced to him by Mr. G. W. Palmer, whilst acting as referee at a cricket match at Heathlands, and Mr. Palmer asked me if I thought he would be of value to us in the cricket field, and I replied that I thought he would, and I soon found my surmise was correct, for he proved a very valuable asset to our team. I have a photo-

graph of him and Mr. Howard Palmer taken on that day by Mr. G. W. Palmer which I shall keep as one of my proudest possessions.

'I next came in contact with him in the firm when he came into the mixing department to learn the work, and I found him to be a very amiable and pleasant young gentleman. During the time I was working with him I fell sick and he very kindly came to visit me at my home, and on one occasion he stopped to tea with me, afterwards having a tune on the piano, and singing a song. On our week-end cricket matches, he often took me to and fro on his motor-cycle or his car, once taking me to Newbury, when we were met by his Uncle and Aunt, Mr. and Mrs. G. W. Palmer. You will probably remember, Madam, when he introduced you to me at the mixing pan when you visited the firm. He also introduced your daughter to me on another occasion.

'As we were leaving work one night it was raining very fast and he told me I was in for a wet shirt, as I had no overcoat with me at the time, but he asked me to wait for him, and we could go out together, and when we got outside the Factory, it was still raining, and he insisted upon my having his waterproof, remarking, "Take this, Bill, as you are an elderly man, and I shall soon be home and get a good rub down, and shall take no harm from a wetting", and he himself put his waterproof on my back, telling me to bring it back when I liked. You must admit, Sir, that there is not another gentleman in a thousand would have done this to a workman, but it was his nature to be kind and generous to all with whom he came in contact.

'I have a grandson who spent some very happy times with him in his boys' camp at the seaside on two occasions.'

I have also heard that a man at the Factory once asked Ronald why he was not at overtime the night before. Ronald, who had been at the Boys' Club, replied, 'Because I was looking after your children'. Others too have spoken of his visiting the men and taking tea with them.

The following letter was written by Ronald to Mr. Povey, from Manchester, on March 16, 1914:—

'DEAR BILL,

'This is written in a train so it may be difficult to read. I have been meaning to write to you a long time to send

you word as to how I was getting on. I heard from Mr. Waldy that you had retired in favour of Bert Owen, to whom please give my best wishes, and were cutter cleaning.

'Are you down in the corner with Viner? I hope it suits you, though I expect it's a hard job after your slack one at the pans!! I don't think!

'I am doing engineering up here. I get up at 6.30 and get to work at 8.0 and work till 12.30, and then from 1.30 to 5.30. I have been doing fitting and turning, and now I am doing work in the electrical department. It is interesting work. And I find time to play a bit of football!!

'Do your best for the old factory at cricket next summer. I wish I was going to be with you.

'Well, goodbye and good luck. Remember me to my friends in the South Factory. How is the Old Dutch? Well, I hope.

'Ever yours,

'RONALD W. P. PALMER.

'You see my name has been changed from Poulton.'

From a prominent worker in the Factory unknown to me:—

'It was not my privilege to be personally acquainted with Mr. Poulton Palmer, but I can give you the impression he made upon me, and I think I may say upon many others employed in the great Firm of which he was qualifying to become a Director.

'When he first came there he was only known to the majority as one of the finest athletes in the Kingdom, a reputation which was more than confirmed.

'I think one thing that struck most of us was his quite natural unassuming manner, his lack of pride, and his infectious laugh, also his evident desire to brighten and edify those with whom he came in contact; for not only was he a good sportsman but he saw there was something in this world for him to do; there were others who, though living in a lower sphere of life than himself, he thought it his duty to assist, and there are now many lads who will sorely miss him; especially I have in mind the boys of Albert Road; they have indeed lost a good friend, but the good work done by their late benefactor will not lie

dormant in them but will bear fruit and be the means of making them grow up to be better men and worthy citizens.

‘Probably no event in the war caused more consternation and regret than when his untimely fate was reported; and it was realized that in responding to his Country’s call he had made the greatest sacrifice it was possible for man to make, he had given his life.’

Another Reading working man, also unknown to me, said of Ronald that he would not ask any one to do anything he was not prepared to do himself.

Mr. Cyril M. Byham, the then manager of the Engineering Department, writes:—

‘Ronald had great ideas as regards the social side of the big concern in which he would have taken such a prominent part, and had already interested himself in the Recreation Club, and instituted a Departmental Cricket League; and now, owing to the war, these Departmental matches are the only ones being played. We made no programme as regards matches with other teams. Still it was felt that for those of the employees who had not joined the colours—and some 25% have already done so [Aug. 15, 1915]—one should keep the ground open, and we are holding these Departmental Team Matches, as I am certain he would have wished.’

When Ronald had been at work for fourteen months, his uncle and he had a talk about his future movements and plans. He wrote to his mother April 10, 1913:—

‘Uncle George lunched yesterday, and we had a good talk. He suggests that after coming back from Manchester, I should do a three months’ trip round the world, finishing up with three months in Byham’s department. This sounds very cheery—but it will depend a lot on whether I can get a congenial soul to go abroad with.’

As regards his work at Reading it was estimated that Ronald would have completed his training in the manufacturing processes by Aug. 1, 1913. Notes of the conversation with his uncle, preserved by Ronald, show that he was to have worked in Manchester from mid-October 1913 till about mid-December 1914, and that he would start in

the Engineering Department of Huntley and Palmers on Jan. 1, 1915. On Feb. 6 of that year he would have completed three years' training from the day when he first entered the Factory. The programme as shown in his notes must have been modified, if three months' travel were to be included. His uncle's death in October 1913 made it necessary for Ronald to shorten his time in Manchester, and, if war had not broken out, he would have settled down to regular work at Reading in the autumn of 1914.

His uncle wrote, April 22, to Sir William Mather, whom he had known in the House of Commons :—

'During the last eighteen months Ronald has been at work in our Factory, starting at 6.30 a.m. and with his coat off (as I did 44 years ago!!) and learning the practical details of our business. I want him to get some practical knowledge of engineering, a wider experience of men, &c., and also attend some classes in the evening at the School [now College] of Technology in Manchester.'

An interview, arranged for the end of May, led to Ronald's residence and work in Manchester, which forms the subject of a later section of his life.

The following letter from Ronald in Reading to Janet at the British Association in Birmingham gives a graphic picture of his work at the Factory within a week of the date when he left Reading for the north :—

'Sept. 12, 1913.

'16 Portland Place.

'On this, the auspicious occasion of the 21st anniversary of your birth, allow a brother to pour out the depths of his fraternal heart in earnest congratulations, and all that sort of stuff!

'May you have a happy day full of presents, and full of promises of presents (like mine), and may you never look older than you do to-day, and when your hair must come white, let it come white suddenly (i.e. stop dyeing).

'You seem to be having a gay time from your letter. For which many thanks. I haven't read O. Lodge [Presi-

dential Address] for which please thank mother with her letter, but I hope to soon. My birthday was thus spent :

- (1) Got up sleepy at 6.20 : Factory till 8.20.
- (2) Breakfast : paper.
- (3) Factory till 12.50.
- (4) Lunch : Bruno, Cuthie Holmes, and Kirby at lunch : very jolly : port and cigars.
- (5) Factory till 6 : very hot baking petit beurre ! with brother of the butler at Wokefield ! whose grandfather was the first original helper to grandpa at the very start !
- (6) Bath 6.10 to 6.20.
- (7) 6.20-6.30, writing this letter.
- (8) 6.30-7.10. High tea (very high : the partridge whiffs like anything).
- (9) Committee of Boys' Club 7.15-8.
- (10) Boys' Club 8-10.
- (11) 10. Look in Factory on overtime.
- (12) Bed 10.45.
- (13) Alarum at 4.0.
- (14) In Factory 4.30 a.m., &c.

' I will write a line to mother on Sunday. Much love.'

THE READING BOYS' CLUB CAMP AT NEW ROMNEY: June, 1913.



Ronald, with his terrier 'Wally', near centre. Rev. R. W. Morley beside him in upper, with W. Dimbleby at top of lower group. F. Covey against R. lower window pane. At least 13 of the 29 have been killed.

XI

THE READING BOYS' CLUB: 1912-1913

His memory is as fresh as ever here. It cannot pass; even though his old boys are all away—sadly many now away with him.—The
REV. R. W. MORLEY.

IT has been shown that one of the last things Ronald did before leaving Oxford was to attend a meeting of the Balliol Boys' Club Committee, on Jan. 21, 1912; and he had no sooner gone to live at Reading than he got into touch with a Boys' Club there. Mr. W. Dimpleby has kindly written the following note about its history:—

'The Reading Boys' Club existed before Ronald came to the town, but his advent and association with the Factory, added to the fact that the Club was situated in a district largely inhabited by Factory workers, resulted in fully 75% of the members being Factory boys. But the Factory had absolutely nothing to do with the Club and had no possible control over it. There was no restriction as to the district or parish, but boys living in St. John's parish were given preference as members; and as there was always a waiting list, residence in the parish came to be regarded as a qualification for membership.'

Of this Club no log or other record existed at the time, and Ronald, who knew the value of tradition as well as of information on all the details of club management, determined to supply the deficiency.

Boys' Clubs, such as this, had begun, by August 1914, to play an important part in the development of the best type of citizen—animated by a spirit of brotherhood, friendliness, and fair play, eager to defend the cause of justice and right, as the records of the War abundantly prove. And the same influence will be needed, more needed than ever, in the years of trial and stress which the

future surely holds in store for us. It will, I believe, help on this good work if Ronald's methods in the management of the Club, as described in his own words, are made available for those who are inspired by his ideals. The same trials and difficulties encountered in the future will surely yield to the same patience and good sense, the same faith and hope securely founded on love.

As regards the doings of the Club in 1912, a week-end Camp was arranged by Ronald in a field at Sonning, July 26-28. Ronald and his friends Dick Dugdale and C. T. Waldy were in charge, and 10 boys were present. Writing to his mother Ronald said:—'It was a roaring success, even though it rained a great deal; particularly at night. We bathed lots of times, and played cricket and football; and had a singsong, and on Sunday a little service.'

It was of this camp that the Rev. T. Guy Rogers wrote:—

'I remember in the early days, when I knew him first, going out one Sunday afternoon to a week-end Camp which he was running for the lads near Sonning. After a glorious bathe I lay on the grass with the fellows while Ronald took a short service and spoke to them so straight and so well. He was able to touch their lives at every point and to touch them with sincerity and truth.'

When the Club was reopened, after closing Aug. 1 to Sept. 6, Ronald took nearly all the evenings and was in entire charge. The attendance was excellent, an average of 32 being kept up for some weeks. The usual games were played, varied by occasional concerts, charades, and a mock trial. In November troubles began and some boys had to be turned out, but were later on readmitted. On Jan. 29, 1913, an entertainment was given to the parents of the boys in the Club. 'If you can't leave the baby, bring him or her with you' was printed on the invitation card. His friend Mrs. Haslam kindly helped in making up the actors and in preparing the humorous programme.

Mr. Dimbleby tells me that this entertainment, 'Lost in the Wash' was, he believes, written by one of the Rugby

masters, but Ronald touched it up for the occasion, introducing local allusions and topical songs. It was such a success that the company was asked to repeat the performance a fortnight later for the Factory Recreation Club, when they were helped by some of Ronald's Oxford friends, composing the 'Flannel Fools' Band'.

A letter to his sister in Manchester shows how immensely pleased and proud Ronald was at the spirit with which the boys played their parts and the keen enjoyment of actors and audience. His mother writes:—

'One night, towards Christmas time, in 1912, Ronald had invited 8 or 9 special boys to his house; they were learning their parts for a play, to be performed to the parents. The object was to encourage interest in the club on the part of the parents, and to help the boys to collect money for their summer Camp. We gave them cocoa and cakes. Ronald had marvellous influence over them. He never allowed too great familiarity, and yet one could see how friendly they felt towards him. On another occasion (Feb. 24, 1913), I gave the whole club a lecture on our South African journey in 1905, showing them slides. How I had looked forward to telling them about our Australian trip! After the lecture, to which the boys listened very well, I played the piano for the closing hymn, and Ronald said the prayers. I could see a great improvement in the boys' behaviour, since my former visit. One evening we had arrived rather too early, so we walked about the roads, and he told me about certain boys who had given trouble. He was always keenly sensitive to the particular difficulties they had to contend with, in order to keep straight.'

The regularly kept log, beginning Feb. 3, 1913, was preceded by a series of photographs taken at a camp held in the summer of 1911 by Mr. Heaton. On most nights there were games and competitions of various kinds. An air-rifle was very popular and one of the boys was put in charge. 'This was a great success, and encourages me to think of making some officers among the boys, which is my present ambition'—a scheme soon put into operation. Then there were competitions with teams from other associations, his mother's lecture on South Africa, and

Janet's playing on the violin. Nearly the whole log up to Sept. 15, 1913, the last meeting before he left Reading for Manchester, is in Ronald's handwriting. The numbers crept up to 37 on Apr. 28, with this entry: 'The club is now as large as we can hold. As it was to-night there was a bit of ragging.' On Apr. 19 W. T. Collier was present and 'said afterwards that it was the most cheerful Club he had been to, which was high praise'. He not only used these cheering words to Ronald, but wrote of the Boys' Club to Keith Rae on May 9:—

'From what I saw of it, I think it could give quite a number of points in some directions to the Balliol Club, although he runs it practically single-handed.'

Then just before Ronald left for the north, Stephen Reiss's name appears in the log for September 5. This was no doubt the visit to Reading of which he spoke in his letter (p. 19).

Ronald's account of an unsuccessful evening, with the suggestion of a remedy, appears under June 6:—

'Nothing much on: consequently noise and ragging. I must get some new things up. Prayers were very noisy, and I told them what I thought of them. Afterwards they said they wouldn't play cricket tomorrow to spite me—we shall see.'

All the boys except two turned up for a cricket match on June 9, when the Club was 'nice and quiet, and prayers were splendid.'

The Camp at New Romney, discussed and planned on many a Club night, was held June 21-28, 1913. The 26 boys who took part are entered under their names, nick-names, and reference numbers for the group fixed in the log-book, which also contains photographs of the sports and each of the 5 tents with the boys who slept in it.

The Rev. C. S. Donald and Mr. A. D. Stocks, of the Rugby Club, Notting Hill, came down to prepare beforehand and help at the start, and the Rugby Club allowed the use of equipment at a reduced rate. Two members of

the Reading Club, Mr. Tucker and Mr. Dimpleby, had also arrived by an earlier train and were found hard at work when the party arrived with Ronald in charge on Saturday evening, June 21. The cook, Frank Covey, a member of the Balliol Boys' Club, was very friendly with the boys and extremely popular.

Ronald's very full account of the days in Camp is in large part reprinted below. Some of the paragraphs have been placed in a different order, and here and there the wording has been slightly changed, but the few alterations are only such as Ronald would have made if he had had time to reconsider a report hurriedly written down just as it came into his head.

'Cheerful and hungry we arrived at No. 27 Station in the evening, made beautiful by the setting of the sun beneath a bank of dark grey clouds, by the tassled grass fairly smothered by a gorgeous blue purple flower (called Bugloss), and by the singing of numberless larks, whose nests we were for ever finding round our camping ground.

'Having eaten an enormous meal of ham, bread and butter, cocoa and jam, we had prayers, and were soon in bed.

'Having elected to sleep with Stocks on the straw stack we were both woken about 3.0 a.m. by the shouts of the boys as they woke and rushed off to the shore. Apparently Dimpleby and Tucker (who chose the beach) were in the same plight (Tucker afterwards confessed that he never slept a wink all night), for on turning my head towards the bungalow about a quarter of an hour later, I saw Dimpleby busily tidying up, and Tucker completely dressed, even to a pair of bicycle clips, gazing mournfully out to sea! This was highly refreshing, and later Stocks supplied sufficient amusement for the day by describing the scene, and speaking of Tucker as "my immaculately dressed young friend opposite".

'After the first day it was always necessary to rouse the tents, and not content with the night, they often slept during the day, showing the effect of food and a bracing climate upon them.

'How to describe those days! That Sunday was gloriously fine, and everybody got burnt brown. That bathe will always be remembered; how Burt began to

learn to swim, and Bushell and Fred Harding tried to emulate the feats of Burgess.

'A short evening service closed the day. The weather kept fine though the wind was cold.

'We lost Stocks the Sunday evening and Tucker Monday morning. That morning Maurice's knees were swollen and on the doctor's advice I had to take him home. Luckily catching a friendly traction engine we caught an early train and after a few changes I saw him in a Reading train at Redhill and returned alone to Camp. On the way he and I made up a topical song—the only effort, and a poor one at that, made during Camp. And to think I missed the stew! Morley had arrived before me and our staff was three strong again.'

The topical song, written at the end of the Camp diary, is printed below:—

(Tune: Yip-i-addy)

I

At Reading one morning, 'bout six in the morning
Some boys were just going to work,
They were awfully sleepy, and always were yawning,
Their work, they felt ready to shirk;
But suddenly one of 'em, I don't know which one of 'em,
Which it *was*, I do not care a hang,
Awoke with a start, and stepped out from amongst them,
And these were the words that he sang:—

Chorus. We're going to Romney, to-day to-day;
We're going to Romney to stay,
We shall play games, we shall eat, we shall sleep,
We even shall swim on the blue foaming deep,
Yes we're going to Romney to-day
Yes we're going to Romney to stay.
Think of joy, think of bliss, but there's nothing like this,
That we're going to Romney to-day.

II

At Romney, next morning, well I s'pose it was morning,
If it was I'm not ready to say;
But I'm perfectly certain the day was not dawning
When their shouts woke me up as I lay,

As I lay on that straw stack, so cold on that straw stack,
 Oh what did I hear on the shore
 It was brought on the wind, that came, whistling down my
 back,
 And these are the words of their roar:—

Chorus. (Same as I, substituting 'are' [or rather 'now']
 for 'shall'.)

III

At Romney, this morning, that's Monday, *this* morning,
 A quite different tale I've to tell.
 If they woke me again, I had given them warning,
 I'd give them one hard on their—well!
 But breakfast was ready, yes perfectly ready,
 Before any boy *thought* to appear.
 Their *eyes* were all sleepy, their *heads* were all heady,
 But these were their thoughts, I am clear.

Chorus, as II.

IV

On Saturday morning, next Saturday morning,
 And we're packed, and quite ready to clear,
 When we're leaving for Reading, hearts dismally mourning,
 And hardly restraining a tear.
Then thoughts of the future will slowly come o'er us,
 We'll look forward to Romney, again,
 As we're leaving the station, I hope it won't bore us,
 If we *hear* this again, in the train:—

Chorus. We've been to Romney to stay, to stay,
 We've been to Romney to stay,
 We have played games, we have slept, we have
 ate,
 We even have swum in the sea (oh so wet!)
 Yes we've been to Romney to stay,
 We've been to Romney to stay,
 Think of joy, think of bliss, but there's nothing like this
 That we've been to Romney to stay.

'Tuesday [when the staff was increased to five by the arrival of Mr. Truelove and Ronald's old Oxford friend Gerald Fisher] was to be the day of the Marathon, but slackness was in the air, and there were not enough entrants. So we had a tent shooting match which was

won by No. 2 Tent. The shooting was curious, as all those who thought they were some use obtained noughts (shouts of "Tinno" or "Woodo" referring to the wood outside the target, tin in the Club room), including the quasi-military members of the party who are qualified to teach musketry to Territorial Recruits. After tea football was always the order of the day. Horace appeared to be a great exponent, and his tricks with his legs left us less skilled people standing gazing. Why doesn't he have his half day on a Saturday, and we should have a good team next winter? Singsong followed and bed.

'Wednesday was the great cricket-match with the New Romney Club. Their class was too high for us, and their kind Secretary Mr. Williamson will give us a team more suitable the next time we meet. Our chaps said "That's no go—why there was a chap there who's been tried for Kent (a slight exaggeration), but we could take them on at football". We had a fine singsong that night arranged by Mr. Fisher, and he told us his tiger stories in India.

'Thursday was the day put aside to go to Folkestone, but suddenly the previous day they seemed to have changed their minds. It is difficult to understand this sudden change. One chap said it was because they weren't pressed enough: others that they couldn't afford the necessary shilling. Thursday accordingly became the day of the sports, held in the morning on a strip of sand. They were quite well contested, but I don't think the Reading boy is as vigorous as his London brother.

'Friday was spent quietly, bathing and playing football. The boys made great journeys to New Romney to buy mementoes of the Camp, and staggered back with large numbers of china vases, &c. The evening was spent in a grand and final singsong. At the end Princess Henry of Battenberg (Mr. Dimpleby tastefully attired in a skirt of a military rug, a plumed hat, and short jacket) gave away the prizes for the sports. She was greeted by the guard of honour under the command of Lieut. R. W. Morley.

'Everybody seemed to be rather sad and quiet.

'The next morning we were up at 4.0, and soon hard at work. By breakfast time everything was cleared away and we caught the train comfortably. A hot stuffy journey, during which we mostly slept, brought us at last to Reading.

'So ends a Camp enjoyed by all, which encourages us

Romney Camp June 1913

MENU

Date	Breakfast	Dinner	Tea	Supper
Saturday June 21				Cold Ham Bread, Cheese Cocoa or Tea
Sunday	Porridge Eggs Tea, Bread & Butter	Roast Beef (Cold) Potatoes, Salad Boiled Suet Pudding & Jam	Tea, Bread & Butter & Jam	Cocoa Biscuits, & Cheese
Monday	Porridge Ham Tea Bread & Butter	Stew with remains of beef & 3 sheep's heads Suet Dumplings Rice Pudding Fruit Salad	Tea Bread & Butter Jam & Cake	- ditto -
Tuesday	Porridge Kippers (small) remains of ham & sheep's heads & 3 Tea Bread & Butter	Round of Salt-Boiled Beef Haricot Beans Potatoes & Carrots Corn-flour Shape and Jam or Sausage & Gooseberries	Tea Bread & Butter Jam, some Custard or Cream	- ditto -
Wednesday	Porridge Bacon (fried) Tea Bread & Butter	Cold Boiled Beef left over from Tuesday Rice Pudding, Jam Cheese & small salad	Tea, Bread & Butter & Jam	- ditto -
Thursday	Porridge 2 nd Ham Tea, Bread & Butter	Leg of Mutton Potatoes Plum Pudding	Tea Bread & Butter & Jam	Basin of Soup (left from boiling of beef on Tuesday morning or less) Cocoa Biscuits & Bread
Friday	Porridge, Bacon Tea Bread & Butter (small jam if surplus in stock)	Irish Stew, suet — Dumplings Fruit Salad & Boiled Rice	Tea Bread & Butter and Cake	Cocoa Biscuits & Cheese
Saturday	Tea Odds & Ends Ham or Bacon &c	Packages of Biscuits, Cakes, Sandwiches &c for boys to put in pocket for return journey		

for the future, and makes us realize that our friendship for each other is no unreal and formal bond.'

The menu, drawn up by Mrs. Dimpleby and written out by Ronald, is reproduced on a smaller scale on the opposite plate. With slight alterations it was used for the 1914 Camp.

Ronald's words about friendship recall Hilda's memories of a walk with him in July 1913, when they came across a number of boys, quite twenty of them, fishing along the Thames below Reading. He knew all their names and talked to all of them; and afterwards told his sister how important it was to take an interest in the men and boys outside their working hours and in all their lives. He said that it was a great mistake to look on this as any special merit or even as an act of kindness. The gain was his, he said, for he found them full of interest and loved them for themselves. He told her of one consumptive boy he had been to see at his home—a boy who was just then without any medical help, as the panel doctor was away, and how brave and splendid he was. Going back through Newtown Ronald showed her the homes of the young fishermen and especially pointed out that of a red-headed boy and his brothers who were particular friends of his.

Ronald entered in the log a full and detailed account of the expenditure (£31. 19s. 10d.) of the Camp, accompanying the statement by remarks which would be of great help in other years. Twenty-six boys contributed 6s. each, the remainder of the sum being chiefly provided by his uncle, his friends, and the Vicar's Allotment Fund.

I think it was a letter from Frank Covey, written from Cromer on Aug. 17, that was Ronald's happiest reminiscence of Romney Camp in 1913:—

'I expect the boys will think of Camp for some time to come yet: I know I very often think about it and it often cheers me up when I am feeling a bit downhearted.'

The first Club meeting after the Camp was on June 30, and the excellent results are apparent in the entry:—'Very

excited after Camp. This Camp has made an enormous difference in our relations. We really begin to know each other. They already want to begin paying in for next year.' Then a few days later there was all the excitement of looking at the proofs of the photographs taken in Camp.

The Club was now evidently on its way to success, and Ronald was anxious, especially in view of his departure for Manchester in the autumn, that its continued growth should be assured. With this object he attended a meeting, held at Wantage Hall on June 30, of members of Reading University College who were interested in the Club. The history was briefly outlined by Childs and then Ronald gave an account of its recent progress, of the Camp and of the position in the following October when he as well as Childs would be leaving. He urged that, being a Club connected with Reading University College, it should be managed by a College man. As a result Mr. B. Perkins agreed to undertake the position, and other members volunteered for occasional visits. Ronald's note concludes with the words—'The tone of the meeting was sympathetic and augurs well for the future.'

Sept. 15, 1913, just before Ronald's departure for Manchester on the 18th, was the last time he took charge of a Club evening and the last time he wrote the entry. He spoke 'a few words describing what the future of the Club was to be and how important it was to keep order'. Following the entry is this paragraph:—

'[Personal note:—I can only say that it is with great regret that I write here for the last time—for I hope that when I return, the Club will be so firmly established in the thoughts of the Reading College, that one of the students will always be found to take the helm. But these records hurriedly written, remind me of a lot, mostly pleasure at an occasional successful result, while the disappointments at many failures soon grow dim. So I pass this on—the record of things achieved, and things attempted, and I hope to find in it, when I see it again, a record of many more things attempted, and many more achieved.

R. W. Poulton.]'

The following words were written to Ronald by Mr. Benjamin Perkins, on Nov. 12, from St. Patrick's Hall, Reading:—

'Before I close my letter I will thank you personally for your untiring work for the Club, and on behalf of the minute passed by the Committee, I can assure you as one who has now learnt the inward working of the Club generally, things could not have been left in a better condition, and my success with the Club—if there proves to be any—will be entirely due to the state you left things for me: everything was ready for me to take up and I only hope that I shall follow your example.

'My one hope now is that before long we shall have you again down here to help us.'

At this point, which marks the end of Ronald's management, I place the following notes kindly made by Walter Dimbleby:—

'As I only came to live in Reading at Midsummer 1914, my experience of the Club prior to that date was confined to an occasional visit when I stayed with Ronald for the night and my going to Camp with the boys to New Romney in June 1913.

'Ronald's influence with the boys was very remarkable. With the type of lad to be found in such Clubs physical prowess carries great weight. Almost all of them were keen football players; their game of course being 'Soccer'. Ronald's fame as a Rugby International gave him a great hold over the boys in the early days of their acquaintance. When they became more intimate with him this fame rather receded into the background, and his sympathy and charming personality made him beloved by all the boys. Ronald was endowed with the gift of adaptability. He was equally at home and his own unconscious self with all sorts and conditions of humanity.

'The following is a fair description of an average Club evening:—The boys would come in about 8 or 8.15, crowding into the little room where Ronald would be ready to mark off their names in the register, he giving a smile, a word of chaff or a nickname to each. If a Friday evening, the half-penny for the week's contribution was demanded. There was little probability of getting this except on pay day (Friday).

'As long as Ronald was with them the boys seemed reluctant to leave the little room, the atmosphere of which by this time would be decidedly "thick". However, Ronald would order a move to the big room and arrange sides for football or cricket, devising many novel rules to add to the interest and excitement.

'Strenuous games of football were played, many of the boys being remarkably clever in "footwork". Quieter games would be in progress in the small rooms upstairs. At 9.45 all those remaining in the Club would meet in the big room for prayers, the rule being that every one wishing to leave before prayers must be out of the Club premises by 9.30, after which time the doors were closed and all had to remain and be present at prayers.

'Ronald usually took prayers himself. A hymn would be sung, then either a few verses read from the New Testament, or a word or two of advice and helpfulness, and finally three or four short prayers. Ronald preferred that these should be extempore and adapted to the necessities of the Club and its members.

'Tournaments of games would be arranged and carried out. Camp was always a fruitful source of conversation both for many weeks before the event and for several weeks after.

'The boys contributed 7s. each to the 1914 expenses. The cost per boy averaged about 20s. or so; the difference in the 1914 Camp fell chiefly on Ronald. He was the life and soul of the two Camps at which I was present.

'Ronald's interest in the boys was not confined to Club nights and Camp. He made a friend of each and endeavoured—usually successfully—to gain his confidence and obtain knowledge of his home life and surroundings and his ambitions for the future. Practical help was frequently given, and each boy knew that in any time of difficulty he would have in Ronald a sympathetic helper.'

I may add to this account some evidence of the seriousness with which Ronald considered and sought advice upon the most suitable parts of the Bible to read to boys and the right things to say to them. He asked the help of his friends, the Rev. W. J. Carey, as recorded in *The Church Times* for May 14, 1915, and the Rev. J. G. Bussell. We may be very sure that his ever-present sense of humour guarded him against a too-great length and a too-

excessive solemnity. The following words were written at Aldershot, May 18, 1915, by Mr. J. G. Bussell (Capt. 7th Bn. Roy. Sussex Regt.) not many weeks before he was killed, on June 28:—

‘His loss has saddened me more than any in this war. Such a life as his is a lasting inspiration. I am going out in a few days and I know I shall fight the better for him—not of course in mere revenge.

‘It annoys me so much to see a notice of him as a mere player of Rugby football. He was so much besides that. I have had talks with him which I shall not forget—talks which showed that there was in him a sort of anxiety for others, and especially the working classes, and that the desire to serve them was almost a passion with him.

“What do you *say* to boys?” he once exclaimed, speaking of his club, and of the best way to help them to some idea of God.

‘No, he will not be forgotten, either by them or any other of his friends.’

Among those who helped Ronald at the Club and whose names are recorded in the log, were the three elder sons of Mr. Leonard Sutton of Hillside, Reading, of whom two, Eric and Eustace, have, with their younger brothers, Victor and Alex, given their lives for the liberty of the world. Noel, the eldest, after three years in the East, was saved by swimming when his ship was torpedoed on the voyage home. In June 1915 Eric wrote that he and Capt. J. G. Bussell had just visited Ronald’s grave together.

XII

MANCHESTER : 1913-1914

Although he was only with us for a short time, Mr. Fanshawe and I both loved him. I often used to think how proud his mother must be of him.—Mrs. FANSHAWE, in whose house Ronald lived at Manchester.

RONALD'S residence in Manchester was at the very outset overclouded by the death of his uncle. On Sept. 30 Mr. G. W. Palmer, who the day before had never seemed stronger, was prostrated by a stroke which came on as he was dressing in the morning. He died without fully recovering consciousness on Oct. 8.

Ronald seemed to feel from the first what the end would be. He wrote on October 1 to his mother from Manchester:—'It is so heavily on my mind. Oh, I do pray for good news. I don't think I realized before how much he meant to me. And there is such a lot that I hoped he and I would do together in the factory in a few years time.' Very soon he was at Marlston to be a great comfort and help to his aunt in her sore trial.

The will was a great surprise to Ronald and at first rather a shock. He felt very deeply the responsibility of his position as well as the much greater responsibility that lay in the future. His brother well remembers walking with him along the drive at Marlston and how Ronald said more than once 'It is awful'. He also remembers, after the funeral on Oct. 11, going towards the little Marlston church that they might revisit the grave together, and that, when they saw from the gate many of the villagers and members of the household, paying their last respects,

Ronald at once turned back, saying that if they went on the others would not like to remain.

So many inaccurate and conflicting statements about the will have appeared in the papers that it is well to set the matter at rest.

His uncle had no power to confer on Ronald any position in the firm of Huntley & Palmers. The decision lay with the Board of Directors. There was, however, an understanding between his uncle and the other Directors that Ronald would be made a member of the Board after three years apprenticeship.

Under his uncle's will Ronald would have become the tenant for life of the Marlston Estate only on his aunt's death, but tenant of the residue of his uncle's property, real and personal, on his aunt's death, or when his aunt should determine, or under any circumstances in twenty-one years. In the meantime the income of the estate was, subject to the payment of annuities, to accumulate at compound interest, and, during this period, Ronald was to receive an annuity of £3,000 a year as well as the interest on £25,000 bequeathed to trustees upon trust to pay the income to Ronald during his aunt's life. This latter provision, the cause of much misconception, is, I understand, a well-known legal precaution—viz. to set aside upon trust a portion of an estate, so that, whatever may happen to the residue, an income will be provided, so far as human foresight can ensure, for a particular purpose—in this case for the maintenance of the future tenant for life. The practical result was an immediate income of £4,000 a year. If the estate had accumulated for the maximum period of twenty-one years, the income would have been such that Ronald, at the age of 45, would have had opportunities given to very few; and that he would have used them wisely and well is the confident belief of all who knew him, young and old.

Sir William Mather remembers

'a long conversation in the course of which the matter of Ronald having inherited his uncle's large fortune

caused me to remark that this would probably make him alter his career. His reply was that it would make no difference, for he knew his uncle's wishes, and having promised to carry them out before his uncle's death, the fact of being heir would make no change. He regretted having been left so much money and did not need any, as his determination was to make a career for himself and earn his own fortune.'

Mr. C. J. B. Marriott has written in *British Sports and Sportsmen* (London, 1917, pp. 19-20):—' We well remember his wise and modest rejoinder, so characteristic of the man, when offered congratulations on his good fortune. "Yes," he replied, "but what troubles me is the responsibility of how to use it for the best."' This was probably the true form of a rather bombastic remark, very unlike Ronald, attributed to him in some of the papers, at the time of his death.

His uncle's sudden and unexpected death prevented any discussion of the will with Ronald. If happily he had lived and the older and younger man had worked together, understanding and sympathizing with each other more and more fully as the years went by, they would no doubt have talked over the will and Ronald would have had the opportunity of expressing his thoughts, which were all in favour of equality and the free use of wealth, and all opposed to the monopoly and the restrictions of primogeniture and entail. But the opportunity was denied by fate and Ronald became the instrument of a system with which he had little sympathy. He therefore felt free to try any legal means by which the situation might be changed, and he told me that he hoped, if he had a son, to bring him up in his own way of thinking, so that they could cut off the entail.

On Oct. 21 Ronald wrote to me from Manchester, referring to a conversation at Oxford with his brother-in-law Dr. Ainley Walker:—' Now Father dear, after thinking over the present financial position, I had in my mind a vague idea which curiously Ernest struck exactly, in

a suggestion to me last Thursday morning.' And then he developed the idea that he should transfer a certain proportion of his income to his brother—enough to render him free to pursue his work without anxiety on financial grounds. This payment he wished to be put on a legal basis so that 'once settled it would be nothing to do with me'. He said that he knew his uncle George would like the idea. His brother, he went on, 'has worked far harder than I have and while he has not had much financial recompense, I have had an undue amount'. He spoke with much delicacy of feeling of his brother, hoping that there would be no awkwardness of any kind between them, and expressing anxiety that no one should know of the arrangement.

In reply to my letter he wrote again saying how happy he felt that both his mother and I were so happy at his proposal. The whole matter was soon settled, and, as it was necessary to secure the permanence of the yearly payments to his brother, he insured his life for a capital sum sufficient to yield the amount. The effect was to absorb considerably over a quarter of his income.

Ronald's determination was entirely unexpected by his brother, who writes:—

'I can well remember my surprise at suddenly receiving his letter suggesting and even pleading that I would take a share of his annuity. It was a surprise because any such thought had never entered my head, but it was no longer a surprise when thinking over his generosity to all sorts of people. This generosity was very characteristic of him, and it was shown in his work for the Boys' Club at Reading, which was a matter of sheer altruism.'

Four years earlier Ronald had written from Balliol, congratulating his brother and speaking of a possible long engagement:—'After all, three years isn't so very long. Nothing like me who won't be able to think of being married till I am about 55, as I shan't have more than 2*d.* a week till then!!'

His friend the Rev. W. J. Carey wrote from Pusey House, Oxford, on Nov. 15:—

‘MY DEAR RONNIE,

‘I see by the paper to-day that you are quite a rich man. I don’t suppose you’ll alter your personal mode of living, I hope not, but I congratulate you on having the means to do things which otherwise you couldn’t do. Most of us have aspirations and no means to carry them out.

‘I’m afraid that you’ll now make acquaintance with a new class of people—beggars high and low—it is a great thing if one can prevent oneself becoming cynical when one finds how many there are who try to exploit one—but I don’t suppose you’ll ever get cynical. I don’t know exactly why I am writing except that this will make some difference to your life, and therefore it interests me because—may I say it?—I have much affection for you and a deep interest in your welfare. There!

‘Luckily you’ve still got your old friends who care for you equally whether you are rich or poor—nothing would alter them.

‘Goodbye—and the best of good luck in all ways; I do hope that all this may bring its blessings to you.

‘God bless you.

‘Always yours affectionately,

‘WALTER J. CAREY.

‘I see you’ve got to change your surname. Luckily “Ronnie” will remain!’

To the Rev. W. J. Carey.

‘Marlston,

‘Nov. 16, 1913.

‘DEAR CAESAR,

‘Thank you for your very kind letter. It is just what I would have expected from you. I don’t know if anybody else will write, as yours is the first, but none will please me so much.

‘The responsibility of it has, at times, rather overwhelmed me; as I have not been brought up to spend large sums of money. But anyhow I don’t want to alter my scale of

living at all, if I can help it, and I shall simply save, till some really worthy object comes along. But I think it is rather difficult to live as a Christian when you are very rich or very poor. You have to spend so much time thinking of money, and what is to be done with it. However as you say it is an enormous opportunity, and I do pray I may not utterly throw it away.

‘And it is splendid to think of the people in this world whom I may call friends, and from whom I can always get at any time comfort and advice.

‘I am down here with my Aunt who is a very wonderful person, and we are, I think, getting to know each other well.

‘Thanks again, and I have not forgotten your great scheme¹ for next February.

‘Ever yours affectionately,

‘RONALD W. POULTON.’

The use which Ronald made of the income which had suddenly come to him may be gathered from his cheque-books, which show that, acting on the principles described in his letter, he continued to live simply and inexpensively.

Ronald's assumption of his uncle's and his mother's maiden name of Palmer took place in the Spring of 1914. A letter to Keith Rae, with post-mark of April 21, is signed ‘R. W. P. Palmer, late Poulton’, and he referred to the change when writing to Mr. W. Povey (p. 263). Many of Ronald's friends wondered that he did not hyphen the two names and become ‘Poulton-Palmer’—an arrangement carried out for him pretty generally in the Press. Before deciding, he discussed the subject with me, and we agreed in preferring the greater simplicity of a single surname.

Mr. P. Delahunty, assistant to Mr. Grant, head of the Sub-Department of Fermentation Industries in the College of Technology, saw much of Ronald when he was working there. They used to leave the College together, and discussed many subjects as they walked and at other times. Mr. Delahunty remembers how delighted Ronald was with

¹ The Mission to Undergraduates.

his motor-car and how much he admired the Cheshire roads. He also recalls a visit to a music-hall when

‘there were several interruptions from some students who occupied a box. Ronald, who recognized one of them, expressed his disgust at their behaviour in very strong terms, and felt much tempted to go up and eject them: indeed, I think he would have done so had not the management descended on the party and managed to subdue them. I don’t think music-halls appealed to Ronald, though he seemed to enjoy the strictly musical turns. He told me the same evening that he once visited a night club in London and that it had bored him to death.’

To Hilda.

‘April 29, 1914.

‘I have been thinking of you often, when it gets especially hot in the works about 10.0 a.m., sitting in the garden reading, and being amused by Janet, while the birds are singing and all that sort of thing. But in case Mother has not got as many flowers out as she should have, I am sending a few carnations to-morrow. I hope they won’t be dead. To-day there has been a thick fog all day, so good old Manch. has hardly looked at its best. Next week I will tell you about my chemistry work, and about a Boys’ Club I am going to this Friday.’

‘May 6, 1914.

‘Thank you so very much for the photos which I am so glad to have for my book. They remind me of one of the best week-ends I have ever had.

‘I am so glad the carnations are nice. I am sending you a novel which I loved, and perhaps you will like it also, though I am a little frightened, as you seem so interested in Egyptian History! But perhaps you can find a spare moment to read it!!’

The account of Ronald’s work at Mather & Platt’s is introduced by memories of his old friend Claude Hardy:—

‘Work started at 8.0 a.m. which meant getting up at about 6.45 in order to have breakfast and get down in time. At 12.30 there was an interval of an hour for lunch, and we knocked off at 5.50 p.m. On the top of that Ronald

used to go to the College of Technology for two hours, two nights a week. Sometimes in the summer we used to lunch off sandwiches, &c., on a plot of land outside the works. The surroundings rather spoil the picnic effect. It was rather a monotonous life at times, and I was very glad to have Ronald's companionship. He never seemed to feel depressed, and always had a cheery word for every one. His friends know well enough what his loss means to them; and they also know what it means to his country.

'Ronald was very popular at the works among all classes. Of course there were some who made up to him because he was rich, but he knew how to deal with them. He took a great interest in the boys and used to go and see their clubs, and sometimes he would take a party of them to the Victoria Park swimming bath.

'One of the funniest recollections I have of our time in Manchester was one morning catching the early tram down to the works. I left the house just before Ronald, and just as I got on the tram it started off. I looked back to see if he was coming and saw him sprinting along with both hands full and an apple in his mouth! He caught the tram all right.

'One week-end Ronald went to a dance at Chester, and towards the end K. G. Macleod, who was one of the party, bet that he could give Ronald 5 yards start in a hundred and beat him. So then and there in evening dress they adjourned to the main street and put the matter to the test. I am not sure, but I believe Macleod just won the bet.'

Ronald soon took to the work at Mather & Platt's and had only been in Manchester a few weeks when Margaret wrote to me that he already looked 'the typical engineer, with perfectly filthy hands!' And Mr. Grant, who taught Ronald fermentation, remembers how he would laugh heartily as he held up his oily hands and say 'a nice pair of paws to go into a lady's drawing-room with'.

The following extracts from three letters to his mother describe Ronald's first impressions of work and workers:—

'21 Sept., 1913.

'Friday we went to see Mather's: and I was introduced to my foreman, in the textile machinery department where

I am going to start. This machinery is most allied to the biscuit-making machinery, so it will be interesting seeing a bit of work on it. The foreman, a man named Mundy, said I was a "fine lad", but seemed disappointed when I said I hadn't done any work of this kind before. We start in to-morrow. Yesterday afternoon I went over and played for Liverpool at Liverpool. We won 48-0, and had quite a jolly game. I have also fixed up 2 evenings a week on bread-making and confectionery at the School [now College] of Technology.'

' 28 Sept., 1913.

'I have done nothing this week except chipping and filing cast iron! But I am going to have a change next week.

'I am greatly struck with the class of mechanic up here. He is very superior, and you can't spot which is the workman and which the gentleman apprentice. A boy goes into apprenticeship at 14, and at 21 is earning about 15s. and comes out, and in 2 years time from then earns 39s. a week. This is how organized labour scores. Then again the Union steps in and says no man shall work later than 8.30 on overtime, and a hundred employers can't do otherwise than agree. At the same time if say ten men were working on a job, which is estimated to take a week to do, and they succeed in doing it in say 5 days, the difference in amount between their total wages for 7 and 5 days is divided between them as a bonus, in proportion to their wages. So they are encouraged to work fast.

'The bread-making class on Tuesday and Thursday evenings is very interesting. I am at present analysing Standard bread!'

' 28 Oct., 1913.

'It is more interesting now, as I have a machine of my own to build, so you get a good variety of jobs. I have just started the sugar analysis.'

Ronald's later experiences at Mather and Platt's are described in letters to Hilda, who, having taken the Preliminary Science Examinations as an Oxford Home Student, was interested to know some of the details of his work.

'29 April, 1914.

'We had a rather fine blow-up to-day. Outside our little cabin, in which are all the instruments for testing the machines, is a big switch-board. On it are the *bus* bars connected with the different mains. At one spot there are two bars thus: [drawing] A. is at 220 volts, B. is at Zero, i.e. is earthed.

'A fellow was making some connections and by mistake put a connection across A B. Now you remember Ohm's Law $I = \frac{E}{R}$? Well, $E = 220$ volts, and $R =$ about say .000001 ohm, as it was a big copper connecting piece
 $\therefore I = \frac{220}{.000001} = 220,000,000$ amperes—a dead short circuit.

'All I heard was an enormous bang and a big flash, and another bang, as the large switch (automatic) came out. When the current gets very big, the switch comes out automatically, and breaks the circuit. The connection was burnt right through. It's quite exciting work. We test insulations with anything up to 10,000 volts. You know 500 volts will often kill a man. But we are very careful, so it's quite safe. It's very interesting.'

'6 May, 1914.

'I have just been to the baths near here with several chaps from Mather's. They are fine baths.

'Next week I am going to do a week's night work to try what it is like. It means going in at 9.30 p.m. and out at 8.0 a.m. I'll write and tell you about it next week.'

'13 May, 1914.

'You will be surprised at this paper, but you know that I am on night work this week. It is now 2.30 a.m., and when one comes to think of it, it is a curious place to be in. Here I am sitting at a table in our test room. The tester with me is snoring, lying across three chairs; above are the quivering needles of the recording instruments, outside the drone of the machines we are testing, and beyond perfect blackness, broken here and there by solitary lights which light up certain machines on which men are working all night. It is quite an eerie sensation.

'You see, the process is this. You take your motor or dynamo and fasten it on its bed, and connect it by a belt or pulley to a dynamo or motor. Then you make your correct connections on your switch-board, and start the machine and give it its full load. And then you simply take readings of your instruments every hour for 4, 6, or 8 hours. After that you stop it and measure the temperature of its various parts. You do sundry other tests, but they are all much the same.

'We are pretty slack to-night, and shall get away about 6.15. Yesterday I got in at 10 p.m. and did not leave till 8 a.m. Then I went home and had a large breakfast, and read the paper. Then I felt sleepy and went to bed at 10, and didn't wake up till 4.15!! Then I dressed, went to see Margaret, came back, had some dinner, and went down to the Tec. for 2½ hours, and then came back here. So you see there was not much time over to spare. That's why I am writing letters to-night.

'Hullo, I must take some readings.

'Will you show this to the family?'

Mr. Delahunty remembers Ronald's 'keen interest in engineering. The last time that I spoke to him on the subject he was busy making a complete working model of one of Mather and Platt's fire extinguishers, and I made for him a few glass bulbs containing acid to use along with it. He was also very fond of the slide-rule and could not understand why chemists so seldom made use of it.'

The following letter was written by Sir William Mather to Ronald's uncle, Mr. Alfred Palmer, the senior director of Huntley and Palmers. It is dated 30 July, 1914, a week after Ronald had left Manchester.

'It is extremely gratifying to have your assurance and that of your nephew Poulton that his sojourn with us was not only a pleasant experience, but also useful in some degree in widening his views and knowledge.

'On the other hand I can truly say that we never have had so charming a personality in our works as he proved to be. Every one from my son downwards deeply regretted his leaving and will never forget his visit. He attracted me in the highest degree on the few occasions when I had the

opportunity of talking with him. It would have been a very happy result of your nephew's sojourn had he been so circumstanced that his future career had not been determined by fortune and connections before he came to us. In that case perhaps he might have remained with us to make a career!

'It was a pleasure to us to meet your lamented brother's wishes and I regret deeply that he has passed on without realizing, though I am sure he must have felt, that your nephew would be a success.'

From Sir William Mather.

'The tragic, yet heroic, death of your noble son has deeply affected me, and I feel it would be a relief to write you a few lines of appreciation.

'In the course of a long life, closely associated with young men of all classes in many ways, but especially as pupils in our Engineering Works, I have never met any one, whose character, capacity, manliness, and charming personality have made so lasting an impression as that of your lamented son Ronald. At first sight, when my old friend Palmer introduced him with the request that he might enter our Works, I heartily consented under the influence of irresistible attraction.

'After he had been at the Works a short time, I heard from my son and others of Ronald's extraordinary influence on our young men, and the high regard for him shown by the workmen in all the departments.

'I regretted that he was not following the career of an engineer, as nothing would have pleased me more than to afford him every opportunity in our Works of reaching the highest position, of which I truly believed he was capable. His modesty, and total absence of self-consciousness, his refined and gentle nature combined with fine physique and moral strength are qualities which would have carried him far in any career he might have chosen.'

Mr. G. W. Palmer's will, appearing prominently in the papers a few weeks after Ronald had entered as a pupil, made a considerable impression in the Works. Indeed, Mr. Delahunty tells me that he heard of some disappointment being felt that Ronald did not signalize the occasion in some obvious way, such as paying the fares all round

when going home in a tram! One action that he took has only come to my knowledge through his correspondence, among which I found the following letter from his foreman, Mr. J. Mundy. It is dated January 5, 1915, when Ronald was training his men at Chelmsford and could not be present. The 250 parcels were sent to the wives and families of all employees in the Army or interned in Germany. The inclusion of Capt. L. Mather's son, symbolizing the community of partners and work-people is especially characteristic.

' DEAR RONNIE,

' Will you please accept my apologies for not writing before to thank you for the very handsome photos you were so kind as to send; they are the best I have seen, and you look exceedingly well in them. The military moustache suits you very well indeed.

' The proposed party for the children fell through as a party, as, on going round to visit every wife and family which we did within a radius of twelve miles from the works we found that most of them could not afford even the small amount it would cost to come to one central meeting place in Manchester. Therefore the Committee arranged to make a parcel up and present them personally on Christmas Eve to every one within the twelve mile radius. This was arranged and done, but it meant a good deal of work for the Committee, but we were well repaid for our trouble for the pleasure it gave to the wives and children. The parcels each consisted of:—

1 patriotic enamelled box with three "Excelda" handkerchiefs, 1 tin of garden roller biscuits, with either knitted jerseys for boys or skirts etc. for girls, 1 book for each child, an assortment of Christmas cards, three new pennies, and 1 box of chocolates.

' I must again thank you most heartily for your very generous gift, which added so much to the pleasure of the youngsters. We had all the parcels on show in the dining-rooms for two days previous to the distribution and they looked very well indeed. Sir William came down to have a look at them and was so well pleased that he kindly insisted that he must be allowed to do something, so he presented each wife or female dependent with a knitted

woollen vest which we had to present to each of them on New Year's Eve. So there was another busy time. All who lived beyond the twelve mile radius were posted. Lt. Loris Mather is at Southport with the Engineers, so there was a parcel for his young son like the others, except that there was a Teddy-bear instead of jersey.

'Hoping you are keeping in good health as I am myself, and wishing you every fortune and success in your career, with kindly remembrances from all who knew you at M. and P.'s.

'I remain,

'Yours sincerely,

'J. MUNDY.'

It has already been explained that in addition to his work at Mather & Platt's, Ronald attended evening classes at the College of Technology, Manchester.

Mr. James Grant, head of the Fermentation Industries Sub-Department, has recalled memories of Ronald during the time that he was working with him. Mr. Grant has consulted Ronald's fellow-students, but the assistant, who saw much of him, died in January, 1913.

'Whilst with us he endeared himself to all, both staff and fellow-students. He helped the students in their work whenever he could, was always unassuming, and made himself quite at home amongst them. He was always hard-working and set a high standard to those about him.

'The students often wished to discuss Football with him, but on this subject Poulton was not to be drawn. He appeared to avoid it as much as possible. One man, a Scot, bothered him very much for his autograph, saying "Meester Poulton, you might gie us your signature". To this Poulton shook his head; but one evening after constant requests, he sat down and wrote:—

"Dear —, I never give any one my signature.

"Yours faithfully,

"R. W. POULTON."

'At first the man was dumbfounded and then, grasping the fact, shouted out—"Man, ye hae done it". How the fellows in the laboratory enjoyed the joke!

'To his future in the Works at Reading he looked forward with a certain amount of anxiety and trepidation: for he felt that the responsibility was very great, and he had high ideals.

'I told him once about his uncle coming to see me to talk over his work in my laboratory and how he laughed when he heard of the words with which Mr. Palmer ended the conversation: "I don't mind *telling* you about our place, but you shall never *go over it* in my life-time."

'Poulton told me just before he left Manchester that his work had been very happy and enjoyable, and that he hoped to come again and spend more happy hours in the Laboratory. But that was not to be.

'By his death the country has lost a man possessed of the power and ability as well as the ardent desire to leave the world better for his sojourn in it.'

To Hilda.

'6 May, 1914.

'I said I would say something about my work at the Tec. Well I am analysing butter and margarine.

'Margarine can be made from any oil pretty well, i. e. beef fat, cocoanut oil, linseed oil, cotton-seed oil, herring oil, whale oil. In each case a white substance consisting of stearin, palmitin, and olein is made—in most cases by boiling the oil and driving hydrogen through it in the presence of a catalytic agent like spongy platinum or nickel. The substances so formed are ethereal salts of stearic, palmitic, or oleic acid and they have a formula of the form $C_3H_5(O.O.C.C_{17}H_{35})_3$. The hydrogen is picked up by the unsaturated compounds in the oils, and this substance is then formed. Then you melt this white solid (it looks like candle tallow), and add 10% butter-milk, and some colouring matter and some butter flavour—and there is margarine!! It is easy to test it, to show its difference from butter. But it is nearly impossible to discover from which source the stearin etc. has been produced. The tests are very interesting and quite simple, but it would take rather long to describe.'

After his regular work at Mather and Platt's and the College of Technology was over, Ronald spent a few days in visiting firms and gaining varied experience. On June 22, 1914, we left Liverpool for the Australian meeting of

the British Association, and Ronald came to Oxford to say good-bye on June 12-13. On July 15 he wrote from Oxford, where he had gone to play in the lawn tennis tournament, to me at the Reception Room, Melbourne, telling us of the Manchester doings:—

‘I finished up at Mather’s and said good-bye etc., and then I went and inspected various firms. I went first to the Lancashire Dynamo Company, and compared their works with ours at Mather’s. There are a lot of their motors at the Factory. Then I went over the Stuart St. Power Station. It is a wonderful place, great engines doing about 50000 horse power, roaring away. Then on the Tuesday, Max, Margaret, and I went to Barlow and Jones’ big spinning and weaving mill. It was extremely interesting, and it was a fine 1000 B.H.P. [Brake Horse Power] horizontal engine that ran their works. Then on the Wednesday I spent the day at the Birchenwood Colliery near Newcastle-under-Lyme. It is electrically equipped with M. and P.’s gas engines and motors, and they make entirely bye-products, Ammonia, H_2SO_4 , Benzol, Pitch, etc. I went down a shaft and saw 2 M. and P. pumps doing 1800 gallons a minute and lifting the water 1000 ft.

‘I go to Manchester to-night.’

On July 22, he wrote to his mother at the Sydney Reception Room:—

‘Here I am spending my last evening in Manchester, and, having written to you, I am going to spend it in a “picture palace” with Hardy as a farewell show.’

After describing the tennis tournament he continued:—

‘Then I went to Rugby and played cricket against the School and stayed with Claude Evers, and came up here on Monday. That day I spent at Cammell Laird’s ship-building place: Tuesday at Vickers where they make the big guns—15 inch—and shells. It was a wonderful place. You should have seen the armour plates, 13 inches thick, cut like cheese by an oxyhydrogen flame which simply burnt the steel through! I believe the burglars use the same apparatus against safes. This morning I went with Max to see a cotton-printing Mill of Mr. Godlee’s. And this afternoon I spent at Crossfield’s Soapworks—very

exciting, as I got hold of their Social Secretary and talked to him for 3 hours on their social schemes, and got lots of tips. The soap-making was very interesting, and I carry a smell of soap on me which will never leave me, as I dropped by mistake a drop of ottar of roses (concentrated solution) on my coat. To-morrow I go to Westinghouse, and then to Reading, ready for Camp.

XIII

WORKING MEN AND BOYS' CLUBS OF THE NORTH

He was one of those to whom we looked forward to be a leader of 'Industrial England' in the near future. He had the world before him and the world is the loser by his death.—JAMES GRANT, of the Manchester Municipal College of Technology.

RONALD took the keenest interest in the working-men of the north, and he had the opportunity of studying them under very favourable conditions during his months of work with a firm whose senior partner, Sir William Mather—an employer for over 50 years—is one who holds very strong and hopeful views on the harmonizing of Capital and Labour.

Mr. James Grant remembers Ronald telling him, in the intervals of some analysis in his department, about his machine work at Mather & Platt's and the long hours it entailed.

'Yet he appeared to enjoy it very much, especially the spirit of comradeship exhibited by his fellow-workers who often helped him, for they were proud to be associated with him. Ronald loved telling how one of them would often say "Here sonny, let me show you how it is done".'

Ronald told me of a talk with one fellow-worker at Manchester who had subscribed to the Memorial to Alfred Russel Wallace and wanted to know whether the Poulton concerned with it was a relation of his. 'A friend of the working-man' was his companion's description of Wallace.

Mr. Delahunty recalls an incident that took place soon after Ronald bought his motor-car:—

'He had the misfortune to run over and hurt a dog. The accident was quite unavoidable and the fault was certainly not his, for he was travelling at about six miles an

hour. However, the owner commenced to abuse him; whereupon the passers by who were witnesses of the accident took up the cudgels on Ronald's behalf, and slated the dog's owner unmercifully. I mention the little incident because Ronald was so pleased at the proof that working folk were inspired by a strong sense of justice which they were not afraid to express, even at the expense of one of their own class.'

The same friend has kindly recalled memories of other talks about working-men with Ronald:—

'He seemed particularly anxious to study the workman in his relation to the employer, and to understand the attitude on the part of the employer which would be most likely to produce harmony. When I offered the opinion that there should be no familiarity between the employer and any employee during working-hours, as it would be almost certain to lead to jealousy and lack of discipline, he agreed with me, but only after a considerable pause, and he seemed rather sorry that I should hold such an opinion. And I am sure that, had he been an employer, he would have cultivated the acquaintance of his employees after business hours, and would have made the comfort of the workpeople and their families one of his first considerations—not in any spirit of condescension, but as a duty and a pleasure. He fully realized the responsibility brought by the possession of money, and maintained that it could not be better spent by an employer than in studying and providing for the comfort and well-being of the work-people.

'He did not fail to admire what he termed the sturdy independence of the workmen of the north, and I remember him contrasting it with the dependent position of the agricultural labourer and farm hand in the south, where he maintained that conditions were still akin to serfdom, and where the Lord of the Manor was practically the controller of their every action.

'He was certainly an admirer of Trades Unionism, but he agreed that it had a tendency to kill individual merit, which was the reason I gave to him for being partly opposed to it. His contention was that if all employers were just and honest the working man would be better without Trades Unionism, but that, as things were, it was the workman's only redress against exploitation by the

employer, and that as such it was a very valuable weapon to hold.'

Incidents and words already recorded will show that Ronald would be sure to listen with regret to the opinion that it was sometimes right to restrain the spontaneous expressions of good will and comradeship which were a part of his natural self. But I am confident that he recognized the soundness of the conclusion, just as he came increasingly to realize—as his friend R. W. Dugdale has told me—the essential importance of discipline in Boys' Clubs and the necessity for restraining any words or actions that might tend to weaken it.

As regards Trades Unions I remember a conversation with him on one of the recent occasions when the men had thrown over their own officials and repudiated engagements entered into by them. 'That's hopeless' was his comment—the same spirit and the same words with which he once met an attempt to dispute the ruling of a referee at football. On the subject of strikes I once suggested to him that men working on the railways, on coal, or some other essential industry had an unreasonable advantage in the pressure they could put upon the community. He did not say much at the time, but later on, when he was returning to Manchester and I was seeing him off at the Oxford station, he suddenly returned to the subject and said that he agreed the advantage was unreasonable and that such strikes should be prevented by the scale of the wages and compulsory arbitration, involving, I think he suggested, nationalization; although, in this country, nationalization is unlikely to lead to financial success or to wages as good as those paid by enterprise independent of government control.

Mr. Delahunty and no doubt many other friends considered that Ronald too much idealized the working-man. But *belief* in an ideal is the surest step towards gaining it. It was a wonderful thing in one so young that Ronald's ideals were never lowered nor his belief lessened by a growing experience of human failure. He never shirked

the facts ; he looked things in the face, and still believed that man was essentially what he wished him to be, and that, given conditions that were fair and just, his ideal would be realized. Love which thinketh no evil was the firm foundation of his faith in his fellow-men and on this again was built his sure hope for them.

The Boys' Clubs of Manchester were studied with the deepest interest by Ronald. Mr. Delahunty tells me that they formed the chief topic of his conversation, and that he continually dwelt upon their influence for good. I found among his papers nearly four pages of foolscap covered by notes which he intended to use in the foundation of a new Boys' Club in Reading. Although under 25, he had had nine years' experience in London, Oxford, Reading, and in summer Camps : he brought a fresh and sympathetic, and yet singularly mature and balanced judgement to bear on the problems which were the central interest of his life, and I do not doubt that his notes and comments on the Manchester Clubs, printed below, will be of value to those who seek to strengthen and extend these powerful forces for the well-being of the community.

'Some Notes on Manchester Boys' Clubs, from visits to the Adelphi, Crossley [Openshaw Lads' Club], Ancoats, Heyrod St., Salford.

'I am just noting the following points.

'1. *Club Buildings.*—Some of these are very ideal—and perhaps the Salford one is the best. Here the main building is formed round the large gymnasium. The objection urged is that it is noisy for the Classes, and also for the gymnasium instruction.

'*Fives Courts* are almost universal, and should be copied : also a rough room is nearly always present, i.e. in Heyrod St., Crossley, for playing football ; but the point is raised—Is it good to free people from discipline when you are trying to instil it into them ?

'*Gymnasiums* are universal and very well equipped (except Heyrod St.). There is also nearly always washing and bathing accommodation.

'2. *Size of Clubs.* These clubs are nearly all too large,

varying from 1700 (Ancoats) to about 300. This usually includes a number of boys at school, and even as young as 10 (Ancoats). When as young as this there is usually a separate department. But this large size prevents the *personal feeling* between staff and boys which is the most important thing in a club. In Crossley this feeling is absent, and everywhere it seems reduced because of the small number of staff. Boys are often divided into rooms—(13-16)—(16-20) i. e. at Salford.

'3. *Discipline* is very good—worst at Heyrod St., perhaps best at Adelphi. It is perfectly easy to leave any room alone, and there will be quiet. The Gymnasium Class (especially Adelphi) showed great discipline: there was no ragging.

'4. *Type of Boy*. This discipline was largely due to the regulations enforced (and of course to the old standing of the Clubs). These regulations stopped or drove out the rougher boys, and from enquiries I find that none of these clubs caters for or touches the poorest boy. This is significant. They are largely apprentices in the skilled trades (in Crossley 90%), and more often than not sons of tradesmen¹ parents (i. e. Trades Union men). This is reflected in their dress (especially at Crossley, and the old members of Salford and Heyrod St.).

'Such Clubs have the immense advantage that they can call upon these members, who can do something definite and useful for their Club—i. e. printing Souvenir for Adelphi, and painting Club premises, making switch-board at Salford, and putting down concrete, and in many other ways. They also have the advantage of dealing with the north-country boy who strikes me very greatly to be more independent, and full of initiative, and more capable of doing a job by himself, without much prompting and pushing. Their loyalty is a real thing, and is made much use of—i. e. at Salford certain boys take turn and turn about to tend the gas-engine, and a boy of 15, three days a week, looked after the cloak-room; at Adelphi they give out games and look after draughts room. At Adelphi an old member teaches carving which he himself learnt there, and the Gymnasium instructor is an old boy.

¹ In Manchester, and generally in engineering circles, a 'tradesman' does not mean a shopkeeper, but a 'man who works at a skilled trade', who would generally, but not necessarily, be a member of a Trades Union.

'At some Clubs Rosette Boys or Instructors are tried—i. e. at Adelphi where they are successful; at Heyrod St. (they are Sergeants in the Boys' Brigade); tried and failed at Ancoats; at Salford they have a successful Workers' Committee, which is entirely elected by the Club. They use their old members a good lot, but officers among the boys do not seem to be successful except at Adelphi.

'At Salford their old members are kept on till they marry or leave. This is much the same at other Clubs, there being a special room for them. Heyrod St. alone has a regular Old Members' Club.

'5. All the usual [games] with Fives and Ping-pong—both very popular, and a good game of Football with 2 goal-posts, 2 draughtsmen and 2 pieces of stick.

'6. Classes are shown in pamphlets. Outside book-classes there are fretwork, carpentering, &c. See papers.

'7. No prayers on week-days; voluntary service on Sundays. This seems universal.

'8. Relations between officers and boys—satisfactory in all but two; but large clubs make it difficult. They do not seem to me to be so sympathetic to one another as down South. But they are of course naturally more reserved.

'9. Subscriptions: see Reports.'

Ronald had noted a few figures showing, at Ancoats, 6*d.* entrance and 6*d.* per month for Seniors, 2*d.* entrance and 1*d.* weekly for Juniors, 1*d.* and $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* for Schoolboys; at Adelphi, 6*d.* entrance and 2*d.* weekly for the Men's Club, and for members under twenty-one 3*d.* and 1*d.* Roughly everywhere subscriptions are about as above.

The receipts of various kinds from the boys themselves were noted down by Ronald from the accounts of the previous financial year. The total contribution from the members was about two-thirds of the year's expenditure at Adelphi; £401 out of £1,036 at Ancoats; £642 out of £1,430 at Hugh Oldham.

'Interesting points about Clubs.

- 'Adelphi. 1. A Club motto, and a new motto for each year.
2. Rosette boys.
3. Caps not to be worn in Club.

4. Cards of membership are given, and are exchanged for games, when games are required.
5. Weekly news.
6. A Christmas party is held.
7. Old Boys Association.

[Also added in margin] Boy-Scouts, Bank, Chess, Library, News Room.

Hugh Oldham [largely run by the Manchester Grammar School].

1. Penny Bank.
2. Orchestra.
3. Prefects.

Ancoats.

1. Week-end cottage.
2. Swimming Club.
3. Poor man's lawyer.

Crossley.

1. Qualification for Camp—attendances at Sunday School and 30 attendances of two full hours each at Evening Classes.
2. Private Sports Ground.

Salford.

1. Junior Branch run entirely by Old Boys.
2. Fives Court.
3. Dances.
4. Male voice choir.
5. Labour bureau.

I am indebted to the kindness of the Secretaries of the Clubs in clearing up any uncertainties and correcting any errors in these hurriedly written notes. It has not been thought necessary to indicate the few corrections that have been made.

I am informed by the Secretary of the Adelphi Club that on Oct. 21, 1917, he knew of 824 members serving and 116 killed.

On another sheet of foolscap Ronald had noted down in pencil some chief points to be emphasized in the new Boys' Club he hoped to assist in founding at Reading. It will be seen that his Manchester experience was fully utilized in these notes, which may yet help in carrying out his dearest wishes for the town he loved.

' Thoughts for New Club 1914.

- (1) We must have new premises.
 - (a) In them we might get a troop of Scouts attached to reinforce our ranks. They could come in on the other nights when we were not open.
 - (b) We must arrange about Evening Classes and the formation of hobbies.
 - (c) Penny Bank, Library and papers.
 - (d) Ping-pong, billiard-table, football, fives, draughts and chess.
 - (e) Swimming Club.
- (2) Club motto and badge.
- (3) Prefects if possible.
- (4) Caps not to be worn in Club.
- (5) ? Cards of membership and weekly news. Premature.
- (6) Promise of lantern (£3).
- (7) Christmas party.
- (8) Labour bureau.
- (9) ? Qualification for Camp.'

To this list of important points to be aimed at in Club management and Club life I am able to add the principles which Ronald came to look upon as most essential. They are well remembered by his friend Capt. C. P. Symonds, who writes:—

'After our first meeting at the New Romney camp of 1909 I saw a good deal of him at Boys' Clubs, and later on talked with him quite a lot on the subject.

'He was imbued with the idea that one of the first lessons a boy needed was that of self-respect, and this engendered in him two principles: (1) His Utopian Boys' Club should be self-supporting in all things, and with this end in view he would have the members pay their weekly subscription or forfeit their membership. This not only as a first step towards his ideal, but as a practical economic measure: pauperization was a bad thing: and so from both sides he combated the great desire of the slum boy to get "something for nothing".

(2) His second principle was that a Club should be really democratic: he was always in favour of rules made by the boys for themselves, and was much impressed by the autonomy of the Clubs he saw in Manchester.

'I often talked with him and consulted him about the

difficulties I found myself in helping to organize the Rugby Boys' Club, and I remember very well his saying what I felt at the time to be very true, that a member of the staff should not be satisfied with going down just to talk to the boys he liked: any one who liked boys at all could get plenty of amusement out of that. We, with the advantages of our position and education, ought to *do more* for them. I had always felt this myself, and to hear this from him gave me at the time much encouragement.

'He believed in showing the boys plainly that we were going out of our way and giving up something to try and help them, and he believed that they should feel that it was the Christian spirit that led us to do it. This sounds priggish, but nothing was farther from him: he had the good sense to know that the more intelligent boys would ask themselves why the toffs came down evening after evening when they might have been enjoying themselves "up West". And it was right that they should have the true answer. He wanted them to feel that a higher influence was at work, and partly for that reason also he would have prayers every evening: it was a constant regret to him that this was not the custom at the Rugby Clubs.'

The following recollections of the Rev. W. Temple no doubt refer to the new Club which Ronald hoped to found:—

'Ronnie once consulted me on the question whether the Boys' Club at Reading should be limited to boys in the employment of the firm. To this he objected on the ground that it made the work, which should have been one of personal friendship, into an extension of discipline, and he desired that the Club should be open to all Reading boys, though naturally the majority of the members would be in the employment of the firm. In the Club he did not want at all to be the benevolent employer but simply the friend of any boys who came. I strongly upheld him in this but I was merely supporting a decision which he had already reached. The point illustrates however his whole attitude with regard to the relations of employers and work-folk.'

Mr. Dimpleby has also written on the same subject:—

'Ronald spoke to me at one time about starting a Central Club in Reading, open to boys in any parish, but this

meant a big responsibility, financial and otherwise. Had Ronald lived, I think the scheme would have matured—no doubt chiefly at his expense—but the building, equipment and maintenance of such a Club would have involved a large outlay.

'Ronald's attitude to boys was certainly that indicated by Mr. Temple in his letter.'

The love of Reading and his work there, his memories of it and his hopes for it, penetrated Ronald's whole life in Manchester; and he knew that he was not forgotten. He kept in touch with the Club and heard that, under the management of the Rev. R. W. Morley and Mr. B. Perkins, the numbers were keeping up well, and occasionally he was able to be present. In addition to the letter from Mr. B. Perkins from which I have quoted on p. 277 he received numbers of letters from Reading boys telling him of doings in the Club, of their football matches and especially of a great Christmas performance, 'The Birth-place of Podgers', for which they were preparing. More than one of them wrote out the whole list of characters and the names of those who were going to play them. A few words which must have given him great pleasure are quoted below:—

From F. Harding.

'I am glad to see that you are again chosen to represent England. This tells me you are still in form. Shall be glad to see you down the Club again.'

From W. C. Bushell.

'We hope to go down to New Romney again and we mean to enjoy ourselves like we did when we went with you.'

From A. Alway.

'Every boy of the Club sends his best wishes to you, and hopes to see you again before long.'

Only recently, nearly three years after his death, I have been told one of those little things which endeared Ronald to the boys of Manchester no less than to his young friends

who wrote from Reading and longed for his return. It comes to me through Mr. T. Gear Williams of the China Inland Mission, who has kindly written:—

‘The incident about which you inquire was told me by a young friend of mine, Duncan B. Hogg, who was for some time a gentleman apprentice at Mather & Platt’s and was working in the same shop with your son. He told me what a splendid fellow he was, and one who possessed such a large-hearted interest in young lads and boys. He also bore testimony to the beautiful simplicity of his character, and absence of “side” or “swank”. My young friend said to me: “This little incident will show you the greatness of his character: one day in leaving the workshops and going down the street, a little chap who was attached to him was awaiting his coming. He immediately joined hands and walked down the street with this small companion, and then with all the pride of hero-worship, the little youngster pulled out of his grimy pocket a sweet, and said—‘Mr. Poulton, I have had some sweets given to me and I have kept this for you’: and like a regular man and a gentleman, he took it from the little lad and ate it!”’

XIV

OUTBREAK OF WAR: CHELMSFORD

His was the sweetest disposition I have ever known, and there are few left like him in the world. We are like the officers and men: we both adored him.—Mrs. GRIPPER, Ronald's hostess at Redcot, Chelmsford.

THE outbreak of war found our family scattered, my wife, Janet, and I in Australia with the British Association, the others in England. As soon as we were informed by cable that Ronald had volunteered for foreign service, we looked for a speedy voyage home, selecting the Suez and Mediterranean route by the 'Malwa', sailing from Adelaide Aug. 27. Thus, after five weeks we left the brilliant air and skies of the southern continent where everything that hospitality and wise forethought could give had been splendidly achieved, although overcast all the time by the darkest cloud of human history. With lights dimmed and 150 miles out of our course we steamed northward, learning on Sept. 4 from the Cocos Keeling wireless of the fall of Lemberg and the French Government's removal to Bordeaux. At last, on Sept. 20, Aden, and a letter from Ronald written Aug. 28 from Chelmsford. It was the first we could have received since the outbreak of war. The earlier part, given in greater detail in other letters, is here omitted.

'DARLING PARENTS,

At Swindon, Margaret and Teddie came up as they had the same idea as that in your wire, i. e. the great responsibilities, &c. But my mind was made up, after thought. Nothing counts till this war is settled and Germany is beaten. You can't realize in Australia what is happening here. Germany has to be smashed, i. e. I mean the military party,



and everybody realizes, and everybody is volunteering. And those who are best trained are most wanted, and so I should be a skunk to hold back. No more now as we live a very strenuous life, and I must go to bed. I am extremely fit, and we are a very cheery party.'

After the cable message we knew what the letter must tell us, and now we had received it we had nothing left to long for except home. The 'Malwa' reached Plymouth on Oct. 5, and five days later we were at Chelmsford.

I must now go back to Ronald in England and describe the part that he played in the momentous events of August 1914.

He left Manchester on July 23, stayed the night at Rugby, and joined the Reading Boys' Camp at New Romney on July 25. From the account written by Mr. B. Perkins in the log, the Camp was evidently a great success. Thirty boys were present. Ronald 'was the life of the place. His previous experiences of New Romney being very numerous, his advice was very welcome. Unfortunately for us all he was away for the Wednesday, the day we spent at Folkestone.' This was the day on which Ronald had arranged to meet some old friends he had not seen for a long time, and Lord's, on the first day of the Rugby-Marlborough match, was fixed upon as the meeting-place. His friend Cecil D. Webb remembers it as their last meeting, and his last sight was of Ronald congratulating a young member of the XI on a plucky innings.

W. Dimpleby recalls 'the delight of the boys and the cheer they raised when they saw him coming across the links to the Camp on his return'.

A few more passages describing Ronald's last Camp at New Romney are quoted from the log:—

'Fortunately this shadowing cloud of war just missed the marring of our Camp.

'The happiest of spirits and the truest feeling of sportsmanship were the marked features of that long (not long enough!) happy hour.'

The end of the account spoke of the Camp as one 'that brought us very close to each other and taught us that after all one of the best things in life is a true and real friendship'.

Ronald returned to Reading on Aug. 1, the Saturday before the War, and he and C. T. Waldy spent the greater part of the evening with their friend Mr. Dryland Haslam, who recalls these memories of their talk together:—

'I wish I could tell you much about that Saturday evening, but those days were so full of happenings that it is difficult to recall details. The two men took the matter of the war very differently in a sense. Cuthbert was, as it were, "mad" to go, should war be declared. Your boy, feeling, I am sure, not a whit less patriotic, saw further than Cuthbert and realized I fancy more of what it would mean, not to himself for a moment (for I knew that he always thought of others first), but what it would mean to others, and, from what he said, I gathered that his chief regret was because of the delay it would mean to his projected work at the Factory. But they both very clearly stated that if war was declared they would do what they could for their country—and so they have, and a grand "bit" too.'

It has been clearly shown (p. 149) that Ronald was by no means unprepared for a European war. It is also stated in the *Reading Mercury* for May 15, 1915, that in 1912 he told an employee at the Factory that every man ought to become a soldier, as he was fully convinced that within two years we should be at war with Germany.

A fairly continuous history of the doings of the 1/4 Berks (145th Bde., 48th S. Midland Div.) and of the part taken by Ronald himself is given in his letters.

To his Brother-in-law Dr. Ainley Walker.

'Aug. 4, 1914. 16 Portland Place, Reading.

'We left Reading at 3.45 p.m. Sunday [Aug. 2] and got to Marlow, 12 miles away, at 7.0 owing to an engine being off the line. We then walked 2 miles to camp in the pouring rain: we got to bed about 12.0 and were awakened at 2.30 a.m., breakfasted at 3.30, left at 4.15, and got to

Reading at 6.30, were shut in the Drill Hall till 9.0, and then dismissed to our homes!! Such a bathos. Now to-day all is excitement. We have been preparing for mobilization all day at head-quarters, and we are quite ready when it comes. We have got billets for the men in houses in the town. We go for 2 days to Cosham on mobilization, and then to Swindon. But I think we go straight to Swindon. There I expect we train hard, but I know no more. All my 35 lbs. of kit is ready. Now I must stop and go down to a drill.'

To his Brother Edward at St. Helens.

'Cosham [undated, but probably written Aug. 7].

'We were mobilized by wires on Tuesday night at 8.0 p.m. and arrived here on Wednesday 930 strong out of 1,000—50 being left at Reading—at 11 p.m. I got to bed at 2 a.m. as I was transport officer and had to see all the stores in. Since then I have been transport officer, which has meant daily journeys into the Recreation Ground at Portsmouth to draw bread, meat, fuel, and fodder.

'We are billeted here on the houses round about—us and the Bucks—so it's a good crowd. I share a bed with the quarter-master.

'We are a part of Section No. III Portsmouth defences: i.e. on the land side, to protect the town from an attack from say Hayling Island. We are also protecting the Naval Wireless Station and some ordnance places. There is an anti-airship gun here which is quite interesting. They seem awfully frightened about airships.

'We leave here on Sunday for Swindon, I think, where we shall probably be in a standing camp for some weeks, getting together. I expect we shall get pretty sick of things.

'It is an interesting life, but not too exciting, as I am chiefly concerned with getting stores all the time.'

About the same time he wrote from Cosham to his mother in Australia:—

'Of course this war is the overshadowing thing here, but the papers are heavily censored and no news leaks out. But there must be a big naval engagement soon. It is a terrible thing, but it may end in good, as it may put an end to armed enmity in Europe.'

To Hilda.

'Aug. 12, Swindon.

'We have a head-quarters here at an Elementary School and are billeted round. We get up at about 6.15 a.m. and have breakfast, and then parade about 9.0 a.m. for about five hours and do drilling. I usually go riding in the evening which is great fun. Then we have mess and get to bed early. That is a rough outline.'

To his Brother.

'Aug. 13, Swindon.

'In answer to your wire I have volunteered for foreign service with the Battalion.

'Kitchener wants 100,000 men, and he has written to ask if Territorial units will volunteer complete to go out as units.

'The Divisional General wanted his Division out. Now a Division, besides guns, &c., has 12 Battalions of infantry—12,000 men. The Colonel paraded us, made a perfectly unbiassed speech, saying nobody would be thought worse of for refusing, and gave us 5 minutes. Result—211 men and 14 officers.

'Disappointment—as 75% is required to take us as a unit. In the meantime the Colonel gets news that all the other Battalions have volunteered almost complete, and so we are again paraded. Great Speech—"If you refuse to go you can never hold [up] your head[s] among the Ox-fords, the Gloucesters, the Warwicks, again. Follow your Colonel and his Company Commanders." Result—over 70%, so if we do not lose any, and many are not medically unfit, we shall go. But I can't tell yet whether we shall go as a unit, so I don't think it's any use wiring mother: as anyhow I suppose they'll come home the shortest way. I don't know what you think. But I feel at present that I shall certainly volunteer any way, even if we don't go as a Battalion. But I am not sure of this so keep quiet about it. But anybody with a military training is bound to turn up and offer himself.'

After this letter his brother and Margaret went to see Ronald at Swindon. Edward writes of the visit:—

'I asked him at what point he had volunteered; i.e. whether after the first or second speech. He seemed rather surprised at the question, and said that of course he had volunteered with the first lot, saying that there could

be no question about it in his case. He was trained and the country required his services, and every one must obey his own conscience. He would not determine any other man's course for him.

'He also said that this war had proved that the Conservatives possessed the true spirit and were the foundation on which England rested. The Radicals in comparison were nowhere.'

Dick Dugdale also remembered Ronald saying that there must be something in the Church and Conservatism alliance—although he could not bear the thought of their conventional association—for those who held such views had come forward for their country more freely than others.

Margaret has also recalled memories of the visit to Swindon:—

'When the great and awful war came Ronald was in Camp as a Territorial and he wrote early in August to tell us he had volunteered for foreign service. One can hardly realize one's feelings at the time, when only the Regulars had gone and the war was spoken of as to be over by Christmas, 1914, and now—when I think I actually know more men "on the other side" than in this visible world. It came as a great shock to me personally that Ronald might go abroad, and Teddie and I, staying at St. Helens, decided to go and see him at Swindon, where his Battalion was quartered. It was a pathetic little visit, walking in streaming rain and shining roads, trying to find the way in a strange network of little streets, to the Head-quarters. However at last we arrived and found Ronald, who was as bright and cheery as ever. He gave us tea in the Mess, which was in an Elementary School, and then we proceeded to the station and had our long talk in the refreshment room. Teddie and I slept the night at Reading in Ronald's little house and the Sunday night at Marlston. While walking to Bucklebury on the beautiful Sunday evening and during the service in the lovely little old church, the tragedy of the whole thing overwhelmed me with terrible force: I seemed to see the end then.'

Ronald's movements between Swindon and Chelmsford are described in a letter to his Oxford friend Miss Marjorie Fisher, his partner in the Tennis Tournament:—

'Sept. 3. Cavendish Club, Piccadilly, W.

'We arrived at Swindon on the Sunday [Aug. 9]. Here we were billeted and had 6 days' training, and route marching, to get the feet hard. Then on the following Sunday [Aug. 16] we went by train to Leighton Buzzard in Bedfordshire, by Oxford and Bletchley. We marched from there to Dunstable. There we stayed 5 [apparently 3] days, and were suddenly shifted by route marching to Chelmsford. That was 63 miles, which we did in five days, stopping the nights at Stevenage, Hoddesdon, Waltham Abbey, and Fyfield. We lost about 100 with sore feet, but they came on, and are well again now. Billeting is an amusing game. I was billeting officer at Waltham Abbey. I went on there by motor-bike the day before they were due to arrive, and interviewed the police and said I wanted billets for 950 men and 30 officers. Then I went to the Surveyor's office and got a map of the town, and saw how the streets ran. Then I went down the streets and found the number of houses in each street, and fitted in the eight Companies with 2 men per house. Then I found houses for the Colonel, and officers, and the head-quarters and orderly room. They were "Billets with subsistence" i. e. you pay the householders $3/4\frac{1}{2}d.$ a day for each man, $9d.$ for bed, $1/7\frac{1}{2}d.$ for dinner, $9d.$ for breakfast and $3d.$ for supper; and they have to feed the men.

'Now we are at Chelmsford, where we arrived last Monday week [Aug. 24]. We have quite settled down and are doing hard training:—6.30–7.30; 8.30–12.30; 2–3.0; 7.30–8.30. There is not much time over. Yesterday we had the final division of the Battalion into those who have volunteered to serve abroad and those who have not. We have about 700 out of the 1,000 going abroad, and we shall be 1,000 shortly, as we get about 50 recruits from Reading every day. But we need a lot of training yet, and I don't expect we shall go for another 6 weeks or 2 months. It's a strenuous life, and one gets a bit short of sleep, but I am tremendously fit. I am staying with some awfully kind people, who can't do too much for you. The only trouble is that when you want to go to bed you have out of politeness to sit up and talk.

'You ought to see my moustache, it whacks Gerald's all right.'

On Aug. 24 Ronald began the long and, towards the end, wearisome seven months of training at Chelmsford—

a period unbroken save for a machine-gun course at Bisley and short visits to his family and friends. Capt. Blandy and Ronald were billeted with Mr. and Mrs. Gripper at Redcot, Chelmsford, until Sept. 24, when the Battalion H.Q. was established at Broomfield, about 3 miles away, and Ronald and Lt. Cruttwell were billeted with Miss Copland at Broomfield Place. A little later Ronald, Lt. O. B. Challoner, and Lt. G. Moore were billeted with Dr. Smallwood at Little Waltham, where he was living when we were with him on Oct. 10-12. During these weeks Ronald still went to Mr. and Mrs. Gripper on Sundays, and, on Oct. 16, when the H.Q. was moved back into Chelmsford, he, with Lt. Challoner, returned and remained with them until the Battalion left England. In February the mess was closed, owing to an outbreak of measles, and from this time, except for a few days when it was re-opened, the two friends lived altogether at Redcot. How happy they were with their kind host and hostess, who soon became 'Uncle Jim' and 'Auntie', may be gathered from Ronald's letters from Chelmsford and the front.

The nature of Ronald's work at Chelmsford may be learnt from his correspondence, although his time was so fully occupied that he could not write often or at any length.

To Hilda.

'Sept. 9. Redcot, Chelmsford.

'I am very fit but desperately busy. Just on a week's engineering course digging trenches. We are all being inoculated this week.

'I hope you will have a ripping time at Marlston. Give my love to Evelyn.'

To Dr. Ainley Walker.

'Oct. 5. Little Waltham.

'I am desperately busy, though very fit, as I have just been given the most backward Company in the Battalion, and it will be a rare struggle to get them right in time. But it's tremendously exciting to have one's own show to run, after being a subaltern for so long.'

To the same.

‘Nov. 8. Chelmsford.

‘No, we have no rumours, and in fact I think we are fixed for a long time: we don’t get any news. Please thank Hilda for the mittens. They are very comfy and I much appreciate them. Things go on quietly here. We are getting up some games, Soccer and Rugger, and Cross Country Runs. Otherwise same old game.’

To Hilda.

‘Nov. 15. Chelmsford.

‘Teddie and Frida are here and we have been round looking at the London defences. Jolly fine trenches they are, and very well concealed, *provided* the enemy have not *aeroplanes*. If they have, they will show up in a moment. We are shooting this week, and the noise on the range makes one deaf. I am so glad Ernest keeps fit. It is fine. And my dear I hope you are pulling along well. I often think of you.’

To Hilda, a birthday letter.

‘Nov. 25, 1914. Redcot.

‘Here I am just *too* late, as usual. Anyhow my dear I haven’t forgotten you, on this day. It is sad for you, first not to be in your usual health and then to be oppressed, as all of us are, at this awful time, but I pray that next year will see you absolutely right, and us all out of this ghastly gloom. Thank you awfully for your letters, which are very cheering to read. You do seem so splendidly better. We scratch along here, but this inaction is a bit trying, and I don’t think we improve much.

‘Poor Waldy, or rather poor me without Waldy.

‘This war makes me a hide-bound socialist. I believe International Socialism could stop war, and that alone.

‘Thank you immensely for the mittens. I like them with or without thumbs, and with you and Aunt Lily working I shall soon have plenty for the men. How splendid to see Ernest in uniform.

‘The European History must be interesting; we had 2 good lectures on it. There is extreme importance attached to the fighting at Cracow because that is just in front of the “Moravian Gate”, and here, the Austrians and

Germans must split—the former to defend Vienna, and the latter Berlin. [Rough map.]’

The next letter is undated, but was evidently written early in Dec. 1914.

To Margaret.

‘Sunday. Redcot.

‘Your pathetic letter quite wrung my heart, and so I am merely writing p.c.s home and to Aunt Nellie, so that you might have the letter. I hope you are all well. And how is little Peggie; you never spoke about her. I do wish I could have a week or two of old Manch. again. This job is pretty dull. And now that they are afraid of invasion, our chances of doing anything real sensibly diminish. They certainly seem very scared. All week-end leave is stopped—i. e. all leave. Anybody who leaves the mess for a meal has to put where he is to be found on a slate; all our kit is ready packed or arranged to be put together in a moment. All the arrangements for an alarm are made, and we shall be in the special train complete in 2 hours from the time message is sent to us of an alarm. I have seen some of the trenches that have been dug out near Maldon, on the Blackwater. They seem quite fine ones, with underground rest-rooms, lavatories &c.!!

‘I ran 2nd in a Battalion cross-country run of $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles yesterday: 250 ran.

‘We are still training, and doing a good deal of shooting on the range. We also have 4 aeroplanes permanently attached to us. And we are getting much more completely equipped.

‘I hear Max is doing some drilling, which is a fine thing. My love dear and I often think of you all.

‘Ever your loving brother.’

Ronald’s next letter refers to a visit to Marlston and Oxford, just after Christmas. He could not leave Chelmsford for Christmas itself—‘Merry Christmas to all. Delayed writing by duties on guard’ was his telegram—and so could not go for the family walk to Port Meadow and keep up the traditions he loved; but a few days later he was with us and was able to spur us to the observance of another family custom, and we went in a large party to the pantomime at the Oxford theatre. Since these words

were written the origin of the tradition has been found in a letter written in Dec. 1907 by the eldest sister to the youngest, towards the end of her first term away from home at Wycombe Abbey:—

‘When I read out your proposal to go to the Pantomime, each one of the family in turn thought it most suitable that they should take you!!! So I expect it will end in our all going.’

To his Mother.

‘Jan. 5. 1915. Redcot.

‘Just a line to say that I am back and very well. I had a very nice time with Aunt Nellie, and thoroughly enjoyed it. She seemed so well and keen.

‘The concert was very well received, and they seemed amused by my song.

‘Everything here is much the same. Various rumours fly round.

‘(1) We shall not go abroad for a long time, because of invasion scares.

‘(2) We go to Egypt at the end of the month.

‘(3) We go to France at the end of the month.

‘But I expect they are all lies.

‘We do Brigade training to-morrow, i. e. 4 Battalions against each other. We have breakfast at 7.15, so it’s an early start.

‘It was sweet seeing you all. My best love to you and Father.’

To his Mother.

‘Jan. 17. Redcot.

‘Thanks for your letter. I know, the idea of England after this war without one’s friends is not very attractive. I shall miss them all. Fred Turner was one of the best, and of course last year I saw so much of him.

‘I am afraid you have had very rough weather. We are trying to do Brigade training in it. This means manœuvring over the country with 4,000 men. We had an attack on Friday and I spent half an hour lying in a furrow of a ploughed field which was full of water. Brown looked very gloomy when he saw what he had to clean!

‘About going—nobody knows anything. The rumour is we are leaving Chelmsford this month for some other

place in England. But my impression is it's no good believing anything, and so don't you believe anything. Anyway we have just had a bicycle shed put up outside our mess which will cost £4. Of course that may mean we shall move!

'Will you thank Father for his sweet letter?

'I have the Company this week to look after, as the other half under the Captain has gone on Marconi guard.

'Goodbye darling.'

To Hilda, who had gone to Marlston with Evelyn:—

'Feb. 21. Redcot.

'Just a line to wish you good luck. I hope you are much enjoying yourself.

'I am having a quiet Sunday here, as I am Subaltern of the day, and have to stay in the area. I have to inspect the Rations at 12.0, post the quartermaster's guard at 5.0 p.m. Then I am helping another officer by taking part of his Inlying Picquet job from 5.0 p.m. to 9 p.m. Then I collect the Reports of those present at 10 p.m., and turn out the quartermaster's guard at 11 p.m. to see if they are awake.

'The Inlying Picquet is an Officer, a Sergeant and 22 men, who live in a house from 5 p.m. till 8.0 the next morning, to be available in case there is a surprise, and so they are quite ready to do anything that is required at a moment's notice. No more now. Very much love.

'P.S. Give my very best love to Evelyn.'

A few days later, on Feb. 25, Ronald was at Bisley for a three weeks' course of Machine Gun Instruction, or, as he said in a letter, 'to learn the 150 parts of a Machine Gun'. Three note-books contain his exact and careful notes. The course ended on March 16 when Ronald qualified as a 'First Class Instructor'.

To the Rev. R. W. Dugdale.

'March 1, 1915. The Press Club,
'Bisley Camp, Surrey.

'My V. D. O. M. [very dear old man]

'Only time for 2 lines. Here I am in [this] place, full of thoughts of you. I am on a machine gun course of 16

days living in A 5 hut. It's great fun and very hard work. Lectures and drill 9-1, and 2-4, and exams. and notes to write up. I am hard at it, as I want a distinguished certificate. So I've got a stove and am quite warm. The work is very interesting.

'Good-bye D. O. M. Quite right about Clergy serving.

'Your l. f. [loving friend].'

During the time at Bisley Ronald met for the last time his Balliol Boys' Club friends Keith Rae and E. C. Crosse.

'To Mrs. Gripper.

'March 6, 1915. Marlston.

'DEAR AUNTIE,

'Better late than never. But I have been desperately busy, and am now up to eyes, preparing for exams. which go on every day from Monday. The time has gone by very quickly and I shall soon be home. It has been an interesting course, and I am jolly glad I went. I expect Bossie [Lt. Challoner] showed you my letter to him, so you know our mode of life. I am just over here for the night. About my return I am trying for leave till Sunday, but I doubt if I get it. I will let you know.

'We have had a game of hockey against the motor bicycle machine gunners, and we beat them. One of their team, an officer, lost his wool badly and was reprovved by the padre, who was the referee.

'I went to see some friends of mine at Bordon. They are in the 8th Rifle Brigade, the 1st Bn. of the 1st Brigade of K's Army; and I might [class] them honestly streets worse than us. They thought they were soon off, but they had wooden machine guns still.

'How's Uncle Jim? Give him my best; I am afraid he must have had a time looking after Bossie. Bossie's letter gave bad news. I hope he is no worse.

'I *am* looking forward to seeing you all again.

'Yours affectly.

'RONALD W. P. PALMER.

'Tell Boss to send me a line.'

At Christmas too Ronald left a note with New Year's

greetings for Mrs. Gripper, who was away. It ended:—
'Look after Bossy, now I'm not here to look after him.'

Looking back on our few last meetings at Chelmsford, London, and Oxford, the first feeling is one of regret that it was impossible to speak of the thoughts that were within us. But if we had, the only effect would have been to cast a shadow over memories that are now for ever bright. He knew how dearly he was loved; he knew the fears we felt. Speech was not needed to tell him this, and so he talked, as he had always done, of the things that had interested him in his work and he well knew would interest us.

I remember his explaining to me at Chelmsford, drawing a diagram on the road with his stick, the proper method of trench formation in a dangerous zone—how the first night a long wavy trench, 2 ft. wide and 3 ft. 9 deep, should be dug with a parapet of 9 inches only, the rest of the earth being scattered behind. Then on the first day T-shaped excavations were to be driven from the front wall of this trench. The heads of these T's, each holding three men, then become the actual firing trenches, each head being protected by big traverses formed by heaping the excavated earth between it and the head on either side. Then, later, shelters are built in the stem of each T, the wavy trench is widened, latrines dug in its back wall, and communication trenches made, stretching to the rear.

Then, too, he would speak of things he had learnt and opinions he had reached which were contrary to his natural prepossessions—how the men who had done best of all in the great retreat from Mons were those who had been most efficient in works of supererogation as he had deemed them before the War; how the Germans were right in their contention that the spirit of war was not the spirit of sport and right in their attacks with massed formations. On the other hand he had learnt that they had been wrong in their rifle practice and wrong in underestimating the effect of ours; they had prepared their attack in three lines, of which the first and second were to act as a screen

to the third with the machine guns. They calculated that by the time the two screens had been swept away the machine guns would be within 500 yards of the enemy who would then be swept away himself. But with our practice at long ranges all three lines went down at 800 to 1,000 yards.

At one of his visits to Oxford in February he told us that he was to be Works Manager at the Front, and I well remember the fear that oppressed me as he spoke of it.

From his Brother.

'There are one or two incidents of this war period that may be mentioned here. Ronald was very amused when guarding the Wireless Station near Chelmsford, to hear the Christmas or New Year's message sent out by Germany by wireless. "Germany sends Christmas greeting to all nations of the world, except England, France, Russia, Japan, &c."

'Ronald was rather amused by the addresses given by the Chaplains to the forces. Every address seemed to lead on to the subject of immorality, and Ronald thought that the subject was so hammered at as rather to put it into the minds of the men than otherwise.'

But although—as Janet said of their last meeting, at Chelmsford a few days before he went out—'we were not able to talk of those things that mattered and of the thoughts that burned within us', it was not the same with all his friends. William Temple writes of the night of March 12, 1915:—

'Our last meeting was and is a sacred time. But not much can be said about it because not much was said in it. I have never felt nearer to him, nor to be having more intercourse with him. But for most of the time we were silent. He was very sad, for he had quite lately lost several close friends. He mentioned their names. Then he said, "It makes a future life pretty essential, doesn't it?" I asked if he had any sort of doubt about it; "No," he said, "because then life would be absurd." We were silent for a long time. Then he said—"What do you suppose it's like?" I said one had no ground for even guessing, but that no doubt there was both activity and

growth; the only thing we knew was the Love of God, and perhaps the reason why everything else was hidden was just to make us concentrate on that. Then there was another long silence. Then he said, "I don't want to be killed yet; there is such a lot I wanted to do, or try anyhow." I asked if he felt that he would be killed; "Oh yes," he said, "sure of it." I said nothing and again there was a long silence. Then he suddenly said, "Of course it's all right; but it's not what one would have chosen."

'I think that was all that was said. But I felt that we had somehow shared thoughts about the other world which for both of us were below the level of consciousness and certainly beyond the reach of speech; and I knew that, with some sadness but with perfect calm and confidence, he was accepting what he believed was in store in place of all his plans for giving and sharing happiness on earth.'

Hilda also remembered asking him if he wanted to go to the Front. 'I certainly don't want to be killed,' he said, 'but I do want to see how our men get on after training them for so long, and to visit the places where so many friends have gone.'

Mr. W. Dimbleby writes:—

'You ask if Ronald spoke to me about his views on the war and his feelings as to going out. Yes, he did. His heart was not in the business at all. He went solely from a sense of duty and as an example to others. He felt very strongly on the utter folly of civilized nations resorting to such methods for the settling of their differences, but above all I know he felt that by going to a war from whence he would probably not return, he was shattering at a blow all those hopes of being of some real use to humanity in the future. Of course his personal comfort or convenience did not enter into the question for a moment. All who knew him would be sure of that.

'In a sentence as impossible to be appreciated by those who did not know him intimately, as it would have been impossible of realization:—His potential value to the nation was so great that he should not have been allowed to go.'

Then, added to the strong inmost conviction that he would never return to the work he loved there was the

weariness and a feeling of the uselessness and staleness of the last months of training. As early as Oct. 28 W. T. Collier wrote to Keith Rae: 'My mother met Ronald in Oxford the other day. He has grown a magnificent red moustache and is expecting to go out before long.' And yet by Oct. 28 nothing like half the period of training and waiting was over. The last time his old chief in the O.T.C., Capt. H. C. Wace, met him Ronald told him how weary his men were of the long delay in getting out, and how his French lesson to them had died away from inanition.

But it must not be supposed that the shadow of coming events or the weariness of useless waiting had power to bring lasting depression to his gay bright spirit. He remained to the end as he always had been—happy himself and the cause of happiness in others. Miss Legge writes of his last visit to Oxford and the last time she and Mrs. Collier saw him:—

'I shall never forget his laughing shout to Nancy and me, as we caught sight of him standing in the trench in the Parks on Sunday, Feb. 28—"I'm defending the whole of Oxford!"'

He was as quick as ever to see the humorous side of things. Hilda remembered how he roared with laughter—'What a gift of laughter he had', she said—when he told her of the non-commissioned officer's words at the machine-gun examination—'Now, gentlemen, you will be sure and not copy from each other's papers!' And a few days before he left England I wrote, to amuse him, an account of the well-known journey to St. Helens and of how, as we waited on the Oxford platform and a train came in from the north, the soldiers it was carrying began distributing badges to our maids. He replied on March 28:—

'Your letter made me howl with laughter! The funny thing is there is a serious punishment for giving away badges.'

And the dominating memories of his kind friend and hostess at 'Redcot' are of happiness and gaiety:—

'Aug. 20, 1915. Redcot, Chelmsford.

'It is a year on Monday since your dear boy and Captain Blandy came here: one can hardly realize it. We are *so* quiet now, so different from what it was. Ronald was always doing something—there was constant fun and noise. He was very fond of my little niece who lives at Sutton. She was thirteen, and when she came down for week-ends or half terms, they played charades and all sorts of games, turning the house upside down. My embroidered quilts were used for trains, and I shall never forget him as Elinor of Castile, or as Dick Turpin, with Bossie for his horse.'

Ronald was of course prevented from taking any part, even the smallest, in the business at Reading during the period of training, but he longed for the time when he would be back at the work he loved. In the meantime memories of him during his short residence were not without their effect, for I have been assured that many Reading men volunteered because he had done so.

How deeply he felt for the death of his friend Cuthbert T. Waldy, killed on October 20, may be gathered from the letter he wrote to the Reading friend who had told him of his loss:—

'Nov. 18, 1914.

'DEAR HASLAM,

'Your letter has come as a great blow, as I did not know Cuthbert was abroad. I thought he was Territorialing in Newcastle.

'I am very low at heart, these days. I have lost so many good friends, like many others, but Cuthbert's at present is my biggest loss. He was very dear to me, and I had great hopes of him in our business. I am so glad he behaved as I knew he would, but why, oh why all this ghastly waste of youth?

'We tarry on here expecting and hoping to be allowed to do our bit. But while there is a chance of a raid, I don't think we shall go abroad. But we are all ready, and my Company is having voluntary French classes, and in view of recent fighting a lot of bayonet fighting instruction.

'I hope you are all well. Give my love to Mrs. Haslam and the children.

'Could you send me a line

'(1) When you get any confirmation of his death,

'(2) In what regiment he went out, and when.'

To Mrs. Waldy.

'Dec. 1, 1914.

'I have meant to write to you for some days of the sad news I heard from Mr. Haslam, but as nothing absolutely definite was known, I thought I would wait. But I now cannot wait any longer, and I am writing to tell you how much I feel the loss of Cuthbert, and how I dimly realize the loss you have sustained. Cuthbert was very dear to me, and I counted him among my best friends. We were united in the same business, and in particular, in the social side of industry, we were tied by the same ideals. I used to tell him all my ideas, and we used to discuss them together. So I cannot look forward to Reading without him, except with a very blank feeling in my mind. He used to come and help me in my Club, and of course all the time he managed his own "Church Lads", and I know how fond all the boys and men in the factory were of him.

'I remember so well, shortly after we met in March 1912, I said I had joined the Territorials: he said he couldn't manage that, as he thought he would not be allowed to by the Firm, but he had joined the Territorial Reserve of officers, by virtue of his O.T.C. training at school. He said, "I don't know what it will involve, I expect they'll shove me off somewhere, some day." And so they did. But his death is a fine story, and it is glorious for you and for his friends to know he has died the finest death of all, because such a death is one so untinged with thoughts of self.

'And we who hope to be allowed to go to the front when we are wanted have his example to follow.

'My people, who were very fond of him, join me in sending our great sympathy.'

C. T. Waldy was working in Reading with the prospect of taking part in the management of the Factory before Ronald went to the town, and the two men became great friends directly they met.

In some of their schemes Waldy took the initiative, as with the starting of a Sports Club for the Factory girls. Hilda remembered Ronald collecting hockey-sticks for this club. Shortly after Ronald's death Mrs. Waldy wrote to his mother of the influence which this friendship brought into her son's life :—

' I have been thinking much of you, ever since I read the sad news that your son had fallen in France.

' Personally I only met Mr. Palmer one afternoon at a friend's house at Reading, but I feel I knew him through my son Cuthbert. In a few weeks [after their first meeting] we heard much of him ; and from that time I know a great development in character began in my son. I twice spent a week with Cuthbert at Reading and on both occasions I was deeply impressed by what I learnt of his thoughtfulness for those with whom he worked, his interest in their games and the Boys' Club, and above all his deepening thoughts on religion and social problems and I know it was " Poulton " who was guiding and helping him.

' I loved him for all that he was and did for my boy.'

Away in Chelmsford with little time for correspondence Ronald did not at first hear of the war bonus given to employees at Huntley and Palmers, but he finally heard of it in the way that pleased him most. He was passing through Reading in his car, on Feb. 27, 1915, on the way to Oxford, when he saw his old friend W. Povey, who shouted ' Good-night, sir '. Ronald pulled up, asked if he could give him a lift, and took him to Caversham to his daughter's house. On the way he told Ronald about the bonus and remembers how extremely pleased he was— ' as pleased ', Mr. Povey wrote, ' to hear of it as we were to receive it. This was the last time I had the pleasure of speaking to him and I wished him Good-bye, Good Luck, and God Bless him.'

I well remember Ronald telling me of his meeting with the ' dear old man ' and how delighted he was to hear of the bonus in that way.

Ronald had but little time to give to Boys' Clubs while he was in training, but they were often in his mind, as the

following letter to his Reading friend W. Dimpleby will show:—

'Sept. 12, 1914. Redcot, Chelmsford.

'The photos [of the Boys' Camp] were fine. I am looking forward to having some. If you could let the boys see them, and let them buy them at 1*d.* each, I will pay for the balance cost. You're quite right "Those also serve" &c., and your job for me is to look after the boys. I do pray the Club may keep open. Please tell the Vicar that I will finance it, and if you want money, £10 or so, just send me a card and I'll write a cheque. And if you want to move elsewhere, I'll finance that also; though I think that would be hardly wise, as you will be short of help, unless indeed the Vicar refuses to let you have the room, which I cannot believe will be the case. We must keep the [Reading] College sympathy, and unless they have a share in running the Club, the enthusiasm must drop. I should be delighted to hear occasionally how you, Reading, and the Club get on.'

Ronald was also able to visit his beloved Boys' Club at Reading during one of his leaves. After the return from the summer Camp the Club closed till the autumn session, opening under the management of B. Perkins, until he too, on Dec. 4, left in order to join the Army, writing in the log a farewell message of confidence and hope. The management was then undertaken by the Rev. R. W. Morley. Ronald came down on Dec. 28:—

'An awful night outside, but a gala night within. Every one delighted to see Palmer again—especially in uniform. Martin, of the Rifle Brigade, also came in. Of course we all shot under the spell of the khaki. Palmer very pleased with the new equipment; and the numbers who have enlisted. We must put up a Roll of Honour. We had a few strong words at the close from R. W. P. P. *re* duty in war time.'

The Rev. T. Guy Rogers writes:—

'I have in my private memorandum book, in which I put down for prayers those who have gone to the war, the names of 19 members of that club. These names were put in by Ronald in his own handwriting the night he stayed with me shortly before he left for the front.'

Then there was the Rugby Club in Notting Dale: Ronald would be sure to spare some of his leaves for this. The Rev. C. S. Donald writes:—

‘Since the war began I saw him three times. He motored over twice from Chelmsford and had tea here with other subalterns. The last time was just before he went out. He talked of his Club and what he meant to do when he came back. I rejoiced to see him, but as I heard his car start off, a feeling of profound misery came over me: “Shall I ever see him again?”’

Among the many friends whose loss was such a grief to Ronald during his period of training were some of his comrades in Rugby Football. On the death, Jan. 10, 1915, of F. H. Turner, his old Oxford and Liverpool captain, Ronald wrote the notice which appeared in the *News of the World* for Jan. 31. I knew nothing of the authorship until it was acknowledged by the paper in the issue of May 9, 1915:—

‘One International Captain’s tribute to another.

‘A very well-known International captain has written us as follows:—

‘The death of F. H. Turner has been a sad blow to his many friends, and to one unused to writing character sketches it is indeed hard to put down on paper the effect that his cheering presence had upon those with whom he was acquainted. Thousands of those who have watched his play in Varsity, Club, and International matches must have realized the strength he was to his side, quite apart from his own individual efforts, which were of a very high standard.

‘I have played behind many packs of forwards, but never have I been so free from anxiety as when those forwards were led by Fred Turner. Those who saw last year’s Scotland *v.* England match could realize what an anxiety to his opponents his peculiarly infectious power of leading was. His play, like his tackle, was hard and straight, and never have I seen him the slightest bit perturbed or excited, and in this fact lay the secret of his great power of control.

‘His kicking ability is well known, and his tenacious

determination to stick it was well shown in the 'Varsity match of 1909, when he returned to help his scrum in great pain with one knee useless owing to a displaced cartilage.

'Off the field he was the same. Whether one saw him at his home, at his old School (Sedbergh), at the 'Varsity, or walking on the hills, his face always showed his cheery satisfaction with the world at large. At any moment he would burst into that cheery and infectious laugh. He was always ready to take his part in any harmless practical joking, on tour or elsewhere. His loss is part of the heavy burden of war, and England in defending her honour will have to face the loss of the very best of her sons.'

Only a few days before he left for the Front Ronald heard of the death of his football and hockey friend of Oxford days, Capt. Ronald Owen Lagden, reported wounded and missing in a night attack at St. Eloi, on March 1. He wrote to Sir Godfrey Lagden on March 21:—

'I saw that Ronald was missing, but I had no idea that you considered that there was no hope for him, till I saw G. C. Vassall in Oxford last week. I am very very sorry for you in your great sorrow. Ronald was one of my good friends, and I can realize what a son he must have been to you, a man you could indeed be proud of. In him, Tom Allen, and Kenneth Powell I lost three good friends, and the world lost three great-hearted men.¹

'I am off next week, and I can only say that I go there buoyed up by the knowledge of the part he has played for England.'

Sir Godfrey in his reply addressed Ronald as:—

'MY DEAR RONNY POULTON,

'If I still call you by this name it is because you are best known by it to me and my boys and their young sister; for

¹ Ronald was associated with the two last-named friends by Lt. A. D. Stoop (R. W. Surrey Regt.), writing to Mrs. Ainley Walker from Lucknow, May 13, 1915:—'So many of the best men have gone under that one feels that the most satisfactory thing would be to follow their example. The gaps among one's friends will be too awful when the war is over. The Harlequins also have Tom Allen and Kenneth Powell to avenge, and I do not think we shall forget when the time comes.' Tom Allen, 2nd Lt. Irish Guards, was killed March, 1915.

were you not the friend and comrade on the field of our own dear Ronny in those lovely Oxford days which he used to call the "Heaven" of his life.'

Sir Godfrey's words about the two Ronalds may, I hope, bring comfort to other parents:—

'These dear boys of ours have died as they would wish in following the call to duty on behalf of their country.

'It is glorious to have lived to witness the grit of our British boys, and to know that there is no lack in them of the chivalry which has been handed down to them through the ages. They will be honoured and blessed by the generations to come.'

I believe that the two friends will always be associated in the minds of those who remember the Oxford of that time—so distant as it seems to-day—and that they will echo the words written to a friend by a great Rugby hero of earlier years, Harry Vassall, when he heard of our Ronald's death—'Yes, that and Ronny Lagden's death are two great shocks to me. I thought them the best type of Oxford young men I had come across for many years.'

In spite of all the sadness Ronald had other and cheering associations with the Rugby game in the period of training. Mr. Charles Marriott in *British Sports and Sportsmen* says of the last letter received from him that it was 'typical of the man, being concerned with obtaining football outfits for his men.' Then there was not only the pleasure of encouraging this noble game among the soldiers but the fun and excitement, almost recalling old times, when he met the friends who came down to help him.

Pte. Sydney F. Bourton, who joined the 1/4 Berks. at the outbreak of war, writes:—

'I did not have the good luck to be in Lieut. Palmer's Platoon or Company, but I knew him by name and reputation before the war, being a Reading man. Whilst at Chelmsford Lieut. Palmer was to the fore in everything to do with sports; he organized football, cross-country runs, and of course a Rugby team. Lieut. Palmer was one of

the few men who could talk and mix with the men as a comrade, and yet still keep his position as their officer. He was never known to lose his temper or to say a harsh word to us. He would arrange concerts for us and come forward to fill a gap in the programme with a rousing song.'

To his Father.

' March 28, 1915.

'We are definitely off 7 p.m. Tuesday;—the transport goes 3 a.m. tomorrow. We are all pretty busy. Now good-bye dearest and say good-bye to mother and Janet.

'Don't worry about me especially if you don't hear regularly. I'll write as often as I can, but I may not always be able to.'

To Dr. Ainley Walker.

' March 29.

'DEAR OLD ERNEST,

'Thanks awfully for yours. As you imagine I have little time, as we are off about tea-time to-morrow. The transport has already gone, and we are busting around paying billets, inspecting houses, &c.

'Thanks for notes on water, &c. I'll take care, but of course we aren't allowed to drink any but what comes from the water-carts which are carefully filtered. Good-bye old soul, it will be an interesting story to tell when it's all over.

'Yours affectly.'

To Hilda.

' March 29.

'DARLING HILDA,

'Thanks awfully for your letter. It is splendid to get two. Please write nice ones to me when I am over the other side. I am awfully pleased to hear that you are so much better. It is splendid news. It was nice seeing Janet and mother. Janet certainly asked lots of questions. Now darling I must stop. When I come back I hope you will be ever so fit.

'Ever your loving

'RONALD.'

His great friend Dick Dugdale was unwell and Ronald was uncertain whether he would be able to come to

say good-bye. He therefore wrote on March 28, to 'M.V.D.O.M.' :—

'If you can't manage lunch, good-bye Dick ; it will be exciting and interesting, but I'd much rather be making biscuits!'

The letter ended ' B.L., Y.L.F., R.' and then 'Give my best love to Claude.'

But his friend was able to come after all and has recalled memories of Ronald's last day in England :—

'I got down to Chelmsford on the Monday evening in Holy Week, Mch. 29. Ronald as usual met me at the station. As the visit was an unexpected one to both of us we were frightfully keen to meet. As usual we shared a room : Bossy Challoner had turned out for me. Ronald had suggested going to the 7.30 Celebration next morning at the Cathedral so we set the alarm for 6.45. We exchanged New Testaments : he took mine and I took his khaki one (or did we do that at a previous visit?). Bossy came in later and scrapped with Ronald ; and decided to come with us to the Service. Next morning we walked to Church and Bossy came on a bike : young Willink was also there. The Celebrant was rather High Church and I spotted him as an "Ely" man. Ronald was much amused at my knowing, and we discussed the question on the way home. After breakfast Ronald had to go on parade. We walked to their Mess, and then to his Company parade, where we said "Cheero" and I came away.'

The last meetings with members of his family are summed up in Janet's first letter to the Front :—

'You were so splendidly cheerful all through our Chelmsford visit that we could not but be cheerful too.'

XV

FLANDERS

What a magnificent life Ronald's was—he's died just when it was most glorious—a great life, given, just at its prime, for an ideal. I can't write about it, but I want you to realize that I think too that no finer man ever lived.

It just makes me long to get back to France 'to do my little bit'—and to get on with the work he was doing.—Lt. KENNETH GORDON GARNETT, R.F.A., M.C., Croix de Guerre, No. 5 in the 1914 Cambridge Eight. Written May 8, 1915, when at Cambridge, wounded. Died Aug. 21, 1917, of wounds received Aug. 24, 1916.

THE story of the march to the Front and the few weeks of life there was written by Ronald himself in his journal from March 30 to April 24, and in his letters between and after these dates. The journal has been slightly modified in a few places in order to include information contained in the letters. A few obvious slips, due to hurried writing, have been corrected, and a few additional details, kindly supplied by Capt. C. R. M. F. Cruttwell, who was in the same Company, D, as Ronald, have been added in square brackets.

Among the few papers Ronald took with him from England was a letter written to him, when he was training at Chelmsford, by the Rev. W. J. Carey:—

'MY DEAR OLD RONNIE,

'I find God very near, thank goodness: I feel that He regards this murderous war with horror and aversion: it is so plainly the result, not of His will, but of human sin—the grotesque and awful military pride and dominance of the Germans: and I fear our own carelessness and unpreparedness have contributed a bit too. But it was bound to come. The Germans meant to dominate the world. It's Napoleon over again.

'So I can go to Him with great comfort and tell Him how I hate the whole thing although one must fight and do one's duty. Of course I don't feel it for myself like I do for all this mass of splendid youth, ruthlessly sacrificed. I've lived a long time and have had many friends and know the happiness of true human friendship and loyalty. And I've had a chance of saying openly what I believe to be true. So I shan't complain anyhow. And you too have known true human friends and have found God—imperfectly no doubt, like all of us: still you've met Him and that is the greatest discovery of all life. I am so sorry for all the boys who haven't made that discovery yet.

'Like you, I'm full of beans—lots to do: and the service of one's Country is all right!

'God bless you, dear boy,

'Always yours affectionately.'

Another letter which he kept, although it was necessary to destroy most of those received, was Keith Rae's farewell and good wishes, written April 5 from the 8th Battalion Rifle Brigade, Rushmoor Camp, Aldershot:—

'MY DEAR OLD RONALD,

'I wish I could have seen you again before you went out, but it was not possible. I thought of you very often on Monday and Tuesday. You know, I hope, that you are and will be always in my prayers. I believe very firmly that "all things work together for good", and that there will be a bright Beyond after this war. It would be too horrible to think of this war, if we did not feel certain that we can trust ourselves entirely to God and know that all will be well.

'And how lucky it is that we can go out knowing both that we ought to go and also that we could never forgive ourselves later on were we not to go. In fact one really almost wants to get out. There is a splendid spirit among every one, as you have already doubtless discovered.

'I will try and write again soon. We are going abroad as soon as our equipment is ready.

'My love to you, and God bless you.

'Always your affectionate friend,

'KEITH RAE.'

RONALD'S JOURNAL

Tuesday, 30th March.

We paraded in Moulsham Street, Chelmsford, at 6 p.m. and amid great enthusiasm from the populace, entrained for the unknown port. We said good-bye to the Grippers, who had been so kind to us during our stay, and were soon off. The train ran to Liverpool Street, and then backed out again to cross under the Thames to New Cross. This confirmed our suspicions of Dover or Folkestone. The latter it was. We found ourselves boarding the 'Onward', the ordinary traffic steamer—Folkestone to Boulogne. [Left Folkestone 11 p.m.] I believe I crossed in it for the French match this time last year. The embarkation was very well done, the men being quiet and orderly, and our time of embarkation only just second to the Bucks who easily beat the record for the port which has seen 55,000 troops cross over. It was an eerie crossing, a full moon, a smooth sea, and a torpedo boat zigzagging about in front of us—troops all over the ship, very quiet and orderly.

At Boulogne we disembarked, and I found the Port Commandant was old Col. Eastwood of the Oxford O.T.C. We formed up and marched up the hill to a camp [the Blue Base] placed about two miles above the town, in a beautiful situation, and splendid view. Here we fitted the men and got in ourselves and spent a very cold night [under canvas with only one blanket per man. They awoke to driving snow].

Wednesday, 31st March.

There was not much sleep last night because of the cold. However, an *al fresco* meal cheered us up. The morning was spent in inspections, &c., and I had a talk with Eastwood who did not know me from Adam. I forgot that my name had been changed. After lunch several of us walked down to Boulogne, where we met several people, and understood that Boulogne was very much impressed with us and with our disembarkation. Back up

the hill in a Red Cross motor van to supper. Then we fell in and marched off to the Pont des Briques, a matter of four miles. The men found the pack rode very heavy and two or three fell out. At the station the Battalion was divided into parties of 42—each party to go in a goods van. When the train arrived we found the latter half full of our transport, with Jack¹ and Holcroft² in charge. They had lost two men just down the line, who had been kicked out by a horse.. There was a ghastly crush in the train, since we were one truck short, and as many as 50 were in some. They could not sit down, but had to stand on the six hours journey. Off we went about 11 p.m. and arrived at St. Omer, viâ Calais; then on to Cassel which was our detraining point. A ghastly cold night and little sleep.

Thursday, April 1.

About 5 a.m. the train stopped with a jerk, and we found ourselves at Cassel, which turned out afterwards to be the headquarters of the South Midland Division. The men seemed none the worse for their close travelling, and were soon out and formed up. After a long wait, during which an English aeroplane flew over, apparently to guard us, we got off. It soon got very hot, and the first three miles were steadily up hill, so the men felt it a good deal, as they are not yet used to their packs. The men too were very silent, apparently being a bit strange in the new country. The view up the hill at Cassel was very lovely [—the Flemish plain, glittering with hoar-frost, and looking singularly peaceful, although the guns could for the first time be faintly heard]. About a mile before we reached our destination, the village of Winnezele, eight miles from Cassel, on the Cassel-Ypres road, I rode on, on Thorne's horse, with the Colonel and other Company Commanders, and the Brigade interpreter, and met the Mayor in the centre of the village. Here we saw where we were billeted, and a dirty old man and one small boy led us off

¹ Capt. (now Maj.) J. M. Aldworth, M.C., O. C. Transport.

² Capt. E. S. Holcroft, in charge of M.G.'s.

to our Company billets. These were a good mile further east, and the Platoons were in farms lying round a public house, at a cross roads called Drogland.

The farms were found to be very comfortable, especially that one inhabited by my Platoon. The woman in charge supplied them with eggs, milk, &c. very cheaply, and the barn they slept in had plenty of clean straw. They had a pond to wash in, and a field to play football in, so they were all right. All these farms had been visited by the Germans during the time the English divisions were detraining at Hazebrouck; but they appear to have behaved quite well. I lived in the pub., and was quite comfortable though the room and bed were very dirty. We dined at a pub., the mess, in Winnezele, and were in bed early that night, after visiting the guards outside each farm.

Friday, April 2nd.

After breakfast the Battalion marched three miles to Steenvoorde, the Brigade headquarters. It was then inspected by Sir Horace Smith Dorrien who commands the army to which we belong. He afterwards addressed the officers in a very complimentary strain. He seemed very optimistic about the army, and said we were to be attached for instruction to the III Corps of the II Army. We then marched back to billets, and had a slack finish of the day.

To the Rev. R. W. Dugdale.

‘2. iv. 15. [Drogland.]

‘D. O. M.,

‘How I wish you were here with me in this little rather dirty French pub., which is my billet. It reminds me very much of our trip in Touraine. But it’s not so clean and the cooking is not good, and the bed pretty flea-ridden.

‘. . . Well there’s no more, my dear old man, but I always wish you were with me. The very best of love.

‘Y. I. f.

‘RONALD.

‘Show this to Claude.’

Saturday, April 3rd.

This day passed quietly with parades in morning, spoilt by rain. The beautiful weather of the last few days seems to have broken up. We had several interesting talks with French soldiers who had just been relieved from the trenches. They were very cheery, but not very smart. Franking the men's letters is a great nuisance, though unavoidably one gets some interesting lights on their characters. The men were paid five francs this day.

To Mrs. Gripper.

'3. iv. 15. [Drogland.]

'Dear Auntie,

'... Very much love to you both, and very many thanks for the very great hospitality you showed me during my stay. When we get back in peace, yours will be the first house after my people I shall come to, and you will be also, I hope, my first guests in Reading.

'Yours affectly.'

[Easter] Sunday, April 4th.

We left the billets about 12 p.m., and marched by easy stages along the road to Flêtre viâ Steenvoorde and Caestre. At Caestre we struck the great main road to Armentières. It is broad pavé, and is lined with ammunition parks of different divisions on motor buses. In Flêtre we took a side road, and landed in our new billet—two farms. They turned out quite nice, but the people were not so pleased to see us, and seemed anxious to make what they could out of us.

Monday, April 5th.

All this day it rained appallingly, and we did nothing except inspect in the barn. At evening the flares were clearly seen and looked very weird. At tea time Geoffrey Palmer [his cousin] came [from Strazeele] and had a chat.

To his Father at St. Helens.

' 5. iv. 15. [Flêtre.]

' Just a line to you while we still have leisure. Please send it to Margaret and to Hilda. I think I wrote to mother on Saturday or Friday and I have not received any letter yet. We are all extremely fit, and my Platoon is still at absolutely fighting strength, with nobody even sick. We left the place we had been at yesterday and came here after an eight mile march. We came on one main road which is very congested with motor transport, and all pavé which is very bad for the feet. There were some ripping motor van workshops hard at work in any corner of the street. We passed several of the Queen's Own Oxfordshire Hussars, and I spoke to the Squadron Sergeant of Geoffrey's Squadron.

' Our Battalion H. Q. is a big house which was the H. Q. of General von Kluck in October. The Germans mounted machine guns in the tower of the church: 200 Germans were billeted in the farm I am at. Everybody is extremely cheerful. We shall stay here a bit I expect; but of course we may have our first lessons in trench work from here.

' The people round here in the farms are very much on the make. My French is coming on by leaps and bounds, and I am doing my best to stop the fellows getting cheated. The food is very plentiful and good, but mostly tinned and biscuit; so they will buy bread at exorbitant prices.

' It is much better fun than at Chelmsford, because, though the discipline is more strict in lots of ways, and the punishments much more severe, yet one can be much more friendly with one's men and it's rather humorous to receive compliments unofficially by reading the men's letters, as we have to censor them; and they are meant because the writers do not give their names and you only know that they come from the Company, but do not know which Platoon.

' Now I must stop. I am very well and am most impressed with the vastness of the whole scheme, and with the wonderful arranging of the troops so that there is no collision on roads or in billets. Much love to all.

' We have had no news of any kind since we came out. I hope the Germans haven't landed!!

' P.S. 6. iv. 15. All your extraordinarily welcome letters just arrived. You can't think how excited we get

about letters. It was an enormous mail ; and I had eight. Please thank Mother, Margaret, and Teddie so much. It is lovely and fine this morning.'

Capt. Geoffrey H. Palmer (Oxf. Yeomanry) writes of their talk on April 5:—

'I suppose I was the last of the family to see him ; we had a good hour's talk together. I remember how greatly I was struck by his fitness and the eagerness with which he questioned me as to my experiences, and when I went with him to see his men, many of whom I knew, I saw there that same spirit of keenness and the cheerful bearing which was such a characteristic of their leader.'

Tuesday, April 6th.

A better day. We inspected and had a short route march. In the afternoon Challoner and I strolled round and came on several graves of the Warwicks, who were cut up here, during the retreat of the German advance guards in October. The farm we were billeted in was held by Germans at one time, but there are little or no signs of war as yet. People pick up spurs and German money now and then, and there are some trenches near here that have been used.

To W. Dimpleby.

'6. iv. 15. [Flêtre.]

'... Give my best love to the boys, and say I often think of them.'

Wednesday, April 7th.

This morning we left billets and proceeded by the main road towards Armentières. We, my Platoon, No. 13 of D Company, acted as rearguard to the whole Brigade. This meant marching behind all the train and field ambulance : and it caused a long series of checks. We marched through Bailleul, where there were thousands of soldiers resting, and through Meteren, where the Warwicks suffered so severely in October. Then at a corner called Rabot,

we turned to the left, and arrived at Romarin in Belgium [two miles W. of Ploegsteert], about three miles behind the firing line at Messines. There was any amount of mud and water about, and the billets were very close, but my Platoon was lucky in having a good barn. We had quite a nice little house, but the woman was a shrew. And so to bed. [The woman kept several canaries whose singing drove them wild.]

Thursday, April 8th.

This day was spent quietly till the evening. I lunched with D. Burt-Marshall [Capt. 2nd Seaforths, 4th Div., later Maj., D.S.O., on the Salonica front] at Xth Brigade headquarters. About 9.30 p.m. my Company paraded for night digging. We marched to a point about 1,000 yards from the German lines, and as we came over the hill, and down the avenue, we heard several stray bullets flying overhead. My Platoon was detailed to complete an all-round defence of a farm in the second line of the defences. Apart from occasional bullets there was no excitement. The rest of the Company were digging trenches rather in front, and had more bullets over, but with no loss. We got back safely about 3.0 a.m. [The night digging on Apr. 8 and 9 was behind the front line, on the E. bank of the Douve, near the ruined farm La Plus Douce.]

Friday, April 9th.

We were again paraded for night digging, the morning having been spent in the usual inspections. This time it was to complete a breastwork between two of the actual British fire trenches, about 150 yards from the German lines. When we arrived at our rendezvous, the Engineer officer in charge said he could only take 50 of my 100 men, as the Germans were shelling and firing on the working parties. We then proceeded down the road towards our object in fear and trembling, as it is covered by a German machine gun. On arrival at the reserve trenches of the firing line I got my men into a communication trench and awaited orders. There was a lot of firing and shelling

going on, and finally he decided not to send out a party, which was a considerable relief to us.

I sent the party back and went on with the Engineer to see the breastwork, but his Engineers met us on the way and we returned together. On our way back we had to fly for safety to a ditch full of water, because they suddenly opened rapid fire in our direction. I then went into the Battalion headquarters of the Battalion lining the trenches, and saw a very cheery lot of Seaforths who were talking, eating, and drinking in a ruined house not 300 yards behind the lines and in full view of the Germans. The Engineer and I then found our way home in safety.

On the morning of this day, I and Burt-Marshall rode up to a hill [Hill 63] near by and saw a fine view of the German and English trenches for about three miles. It was a wonderful sight, absolutely still and calm, and not a sign of life. [Ronald was greatly impressed by the sight of Germans walking about in Messines village on the hill opposite, and the distant view of Lille, with its tall chimneys smoking for the benefit of the Huns.] On our way up we saw several graves, among them Malcolm Hepburn's. I lunched at XI Brigade with Keppell—the Irish trials forward.

Saturday, April 10th.

At 6 p.m. the Company paraded to go into the trenches [on left of 4th Div., near La Plus Douce]. Platoons were taken and intermingled with Companies of the Dublin Fusiliers. These had a breastwork just in front of where we were digging on the first evening. We had a long slow march down an avenue road. The Dublins were very humorous all the time and quite cheerful. We were a bit apprehensive! We then had a long march on what are called 'Corduoy' roads. These are short pieces of boughs fastened to planks, to make a rough pathway over the mud. This path leads roughly parallel with the trenches in the valley about 600 yards behind. We passed several ruined cottages, which are full of dead, and the

whole atmosphere was tainted with the smell of death. Occasional bullets flew over, but they were mostly high. After about half a mile we moved diagonally up to the brow of the hill and just over the top came to the first of the breastworks where we were to live. The ground behind was riddled with shell holes, and broken with communication trenches full of water. The breastworks were dug about one foot into the ground and were made of sandbags and earth. There were frequent traverses but the works were not continuous, there being three separate works for the one Company. They had parados, but not all of them were sufficiently high to be much good. After a prolonged wait outside the trenches we all squashed in. I found the dugout of the nearest Platoon commander, and sat with him. The dugouts were mostly in the front of the trench, though some were in the rear. The men were divided up for duty with the Regulars. They did ordinary sentry duty and also went out on the listening post, some few yards in front of the trench. The night was very quiet, there being only sniping, to which the Dublins never replied. Later in the evening I went to see the Captain, and went out with the second in command on a reconnoitring patrol. I carried a rifle and 15 rounds. We climbed through the wire and went a few yards forward and lay down, in the formation—Corporal and Officer together, and two men in rear, interval ten yards, distance from Officer about ten yards. They watched the rear and flank. I was lying for a quarter of an hour by a very decomposed cow! After listening hard we moved forward, and again lay doggo. This went on for about an hour, during which time we were perhaps 100 to 150 yards out. Then we returned, each pair covering the other two.

Sunday, April 11th.

We all of course stood to arms at dawn, and the Germans started a tremendous fusilade, as is their custom. But soon after all was quiet, and you could see the smoke rising from the fires all down our line, and the German

line. About 11 a.m. our field guns put 12 shells on to the German trenches in front of us. Immediately the German guns opened on us, putting 10 high explosive 6 in. shells and the two last 'White Hope' shrapnel—their back-blast shrapnel. The result was 8 ft. of parapet blown down, another bit shaken down, one man with a dislocated shoulder of ours, and five men of the Dublins wounded, one seriously. As they were all within 3 yards of me, I was lucky. The brass head of a shell shot through the parapet, missed a man by an inch, and went into a dugout where we obtained it. The shelling is very frightening—the report, the nearing whistle and the burst, and then you wonder if you are alive. Crouching under the parapet is all right for the high explosive, but for shrapnel it is no good, so that is why they mix them up. The men—the Dublins—were quite as frightened as we were as a rule, but some didn't care a damn. Some were praying, some eating breakfast, one was counting his Rosary, and another next door was smoking a cigarette and cheering up our fellows. After a prolonged pause, we rose from our constrained position, and went on with our occupations; but it unnerved me for a bit.

After lunch the sun shone gloriously, and we had three or four aeroplanes (British) over us; these went right over the German lines, on reconnoitring trips. They were heavily shelled and I counted 134 shrapnel shells round one aeroplane. It was a beautiful sight, only embarrassing because the shrapnel kept dropping round us. Soon after, just as it was getting dark, one of our aeroplanes came flying low along our line. All the trenches opposite opened a furious fusilade, hitting our parapet frequently. Our guns then opened on their trenches and I was afraid they would start on us. The evening ended quietly.

Monday, April 12th.

At 2.30 a.m. I had the Platoon out of the trench, and formed up and found all present. This was a bit ticklish,

as it had to be done standing just behind the trench. Then we met Thorne and got back to the road, met the other Platoons and so home to Romarin to breakfast. No sooner arrived than we were ordered to move in an hour and march with the rest of the Battalion to Steenwerck, where we arrived at 11 a.m. and went into excellent billets in farms [at the S. end of the village, by the Estaires cross roads], and lay down at peace.

To his Mother.

'12. iv. 15. [Steenwerck.]

'We have just returned from the trenches and so I will tell you a bit about it. [Describes movements up to Romarin where] the billets were very close but it was quite comfortable. That evening two Companies went into the trenches, being split up for instruction, and we dug reserve trenches about 1,000 yards behind the trenches. Here I first heard the stray bullets from the firing line flying over us. Of course it is very difficult to avoid having a certain amount of loose bullets about, but they are always high.

'The second night I took another night digging party out to put up a breastwork a very short distance from the Germans. But they knew about it and shelled the place and put machine guns on it, so it wasn't a very healthy place and we crept off.

[Describes ride next morning with Burt-Marshall.] 'It is an extraordinary sight the two lines running across the face of the earth at varying distances from 100 to 500 yards apart; and back from them run the enormous series of communication and reserve trenches. And the funny thing is the absolute stillness and lack of movement and almost of sound, as the snipers are not very vigorous here. All the houses and farms near by are ruins, so it is a curious sight. Saturday night we went up to the trenches. We arrived up there of course after dusk. It is an eerie feeling, as the flares go up every minute or so, and you have to freeze, as you are of course in easy range; but they can't see you if you freeze. The ground is absolutely broken by shell holes full of water, so it is easy to have a bathe at any moment. It isn't very savoury on the way up, as there are still a good many dead horses and cows unburied. We had an exciting

day yesterday, being shelled in the morning. It isn't at all pleasant but luckily they did little damage. They sent 12 shells. One knocked about six feet of breastwork down, and another wounded five men, but quite slightly. So you needn't worry, dear, as they do very little damage; but they are a bit disconcerting to the nerves till one gets used to it. We watched our guns shelling their trench just before, and they simply retaliated tit for tat, which was rather hard lines as we didn't ask the gunners to hit their trenches, and were quite content to live in peace.

[Description of aeroplanes.] 'One had 134 shells put up against it, but without effect. You see the little ball of white smoke, as each shrapnel bursts. Then their trenches were shelled again but we luckily escaped.

'We came out this morning about two, and at 9.0 marched here, where we rest for three or four days and then I expect we take over a line of trenches.

'Will you tell Margaret that I saw in a wood suddenly the grave of Malcolm Hepburn. The Seaforths are in the Brigade to which we are attached, and they are very careful of their graves. It was beautifully turfed over, and planted with primroses and surrounded with a rough palisade of wood. The cross was plain deal painted white with "In Memory of 2nd Lieut. M. Hepburn, &c., Killed in action, Nov. 1914." If his sister wanted I could get it photo'd I expect.

'We are all very fit. The battalion only had two casualties wounded, the whole experience. But we want sleep.

'Good-bye darling. This is written in a jolly little farm-yard in the open air.'

Tuesday, April 13th.

Still peacefully in billets at Steenwerck.

To R. W. Dugdale.

'13. iv. 15. [Steenwerck.]

'D. O. M.,

'I am sitting outside a little farm in a rest billet some ten miles back: I have to stay out as the room stinks so inside. We are all full of beans, though why we haven't had any casualties I can't think. I suppose in this war

one bullet hits in three or four million fired. They snipe all the time and hit nothing. We go up to trenches again Thursday. I have at least 11813 things to tell you. You say you don't know where I am. Write mother for any news.

'To-morrow we play Rugger for the South Midland Division against the 4th Division. It ought to be quite amusing.

'15th. ["Tourist Lines".] I couldn't finish this the other day, so now I am doing so in a most ideal position. We came in here last night and are in a wood, holding a kind of outpost position, not exactly a line of trenches. The wood is full of wire and is very impregnable. You can move about safely, as you have cover from view, except in the advanced posts, but of course there is no cover from fire except in the dugouts. But they are not sniping much and so it is very peaceful, sitting at a table behind my dugout writing these letters.

'This wood was taken after a hell of a fight, and only during the Christmas truce could many of the bodies be buried. So they are buried very shallow, and in about a month it should be pretty evil. As it is it stinks abominably and close to one advanced work there is a poor fellow only half buried with his bayonet scabbard sticking out.

'The match was quite amusing. We won 14-0 [17-0], and there were millions of Generals there. I must stop now. I will write later.

'Ever your loving Ronald.'

Wednesday, April 14th.

After breakfast drove into Nieppe in a motor-lorry to see an exhibition of bomb-throwing. After that we drove in a motor ambulance to Armentières to have lunch and to shop. This town seems none the worse and there is plenty of business, though everything is expensive. After lunch we moved to Nieppe, and I played Rugger for the South Midland Division [48th] against the 4th Division. It was an amusing game; we had opposite us players like W. J. Tyrrell [Ireland: Captain], H. J. S. Morton [Cambridge and England], J. G. Keppell [Ireland: Trials], W. P. Hinton [Ireland: Full Back], and were refereed

by Basil Maclear¹ [Ireland]. I had a goodish side, chiefly 5th Gloucesters² and we won 14-0, but they stuck it well considering their condition. Several of the Liverpool Scottish from Ypres came over, including Dum Cunningham and Dick Lloyd. It was splendid to see so many Rugger players about. I changed in the room of the Captain of the 4th Divisional Staff. They lived in great style, quite unnecessary I thought. In fact they rather bored me. They ought to do a turn in the trenches with us all. Back to bed.

Thursday, April 15th.

We left Steenwerck about 8.30 a.m. and marched to a farm about one mile behind Ploegsteert. Here we stayed all day, and moved off about 4 p.m. for Ploegsteert. We then moved straight on to the wood, and took a

¹ Capt., R. Dublin Fusiliers, killed a few weeks later, about May 28, the first Irish International to fall.

² Lt.-Col. G. F. Collett, D.S.O. (*Cambridge and Gloucestershire*), who was one of the Touch Judges, has kindly obtained a list of Ronald's team. The Rugby Teams of the players are printed in italics, and when none is mentioned Gloucestershire is to be understood. When no military unit is given the 1/5 Gloucesters² is to be understood.

Full Back: Pte. C. Cook (wounded); *Three-Quarters*: Pte. Washbourne, Pte. S. Hamblin, Lt. R. W. Poulton Palmer (R. Berks., *Liverpool, English Captain*, killed), Pte. F. Webb (wounded); *Half-Backs*: Pte. S. Sysum (killed), Lce.-Corpl. A. Lewis (Capt., M.C. and bar); *Forwards*: Lt. C. R. M. F. Cruttwell (Capt., R. Berks., *Oxford Trials*), Lt. L. R. C. Sumner (Capt., Act. Maj., M.C., wounded), Capt. F. H. Deakin (Warwicks, *Midland Counties, Capt. of Moseley*, wounded), Pte. J. Harris (*Gloucester City*, wounded), Lce.-Corpl. Millard (Sergt., killed), Pte. A. Cook (*Gloucester City*, wounded), Pte. S. Smart (*Gloucestershire and England*, wounded), one uncertain.

Col. Collett writes: 'My recollection of the match was that the combination of the 48th was much superior to that of the 4th and this gave the former victory. Although your son did not actually score he was the "pivotal" man of the three-quarters and made many beautiful openings. As the 4th had been in trenches it was decided to play 25 minutes each way only. The score was not 14, as your son thought, but 17, to nil.'

Lt. R. Cunningham remembers that the 4th Division team included, in addition to the names mentioned by Ronald, R. Fraser (*Cambridge and Scotland*), and J. N. Thompson (*London Scottish*: three-quarter).

corduroy path called Regent Street, through the wood. After about 2,000 yards walking, passing various breastworks in the wood, we came up to our reserve breastworks held by two reserve Platoons. We—Platoon 13—pushed up to some breastworks called the 'Tourist Lines',¹ and from these sent out advanced posts to breastworks in the edge of the wood. There was a further position, a ruined house ['second German house'], right in the edge of the wood, about 200 yards from the German trenches, which were plainly visible. It was quite amusing walking about in the wood apparently in full view of the Germans who however could not see us. There was continuous sniping, but fortunately no one was hit. The change over from the Hants Regiment was soon accomplished and we settled down for the night. I had to take out a listening post to a house ['first German house'] across a stream about 100 yds. further than the house mentioned before. This was a bit ticklish, as it was very near the Germans, and the flares fell right among us. But it was a quiet night and nothing of event happened.

Friday, April 16th.

In the daylight we saw our position, and learnt the various intricate paths through the wood. The wood in front of the 'Tourist Lines' was thoroughly wired, and so there was no continuous defensive position, but really a series of breastworks, making a kind of outpost position, with the picquet in the 'first German house', and breastworks, and the support in the 'Tourist Lines', and the reserve where our two reserve Platoons were. It was ticklish work getting up to the advanced posts by daylight, but the Germans were very quiet, and only an occasional sniper interfered with our repose. A certain amount of shelling went on, but it was beyond us into the woods. That evening was dark and raining, and the going on the corduroy paths very difficult. We had to use electric

¹ So called because reporters were taken along them and shown the German lines.

torches, with a certain amount of risk, but the night turned out quite quiet. I had arranged to take out the relief for the listening post, but it was so dark that I decided to take out only the Lance-corporal and tell the post they must stick it till dawn. On arrival I found that all was well, but they thought they had seen a man in front, but after listening a long time it seemed to be nothing. While there a German flare fell within a foot of us, so it was close work. On returning, before crossing the stream, I thought I saw something move, so had to wait five minutes till a flare came up. Then I found it was a barrel! On my way up to the post I found —, Lance-corporal, asleep at his post on duty. I had him arrested and I fear a Field General Court-martial for him; but his nerves are quite smashed by the shelling, and that should count in his favour.

Saturday, April 17th.

A beautiful morning. No event except aeroplane shelling. I had to attend twice at Battalion headquarters for court of inquiry on —. It is a beautiful walk to the farm where the headquarters are, through the wood, blooming with cowslips and bluebells, past two or three beautifully kept graves. On arrival there I attended the funeral of a man in A Company shot by a comrade by mistake in the trenches the previous day. It was in a pretty little cemetery in a field, entirely a military one. The losses round here must have been very high—mostly East Lancashires and Hampshires. About 5 p.m. the 7th Worcesters arrived to take over from us. I got the Platoon off and stayed behind to see the officer in. I had to furnish him with a Lance-corporal to show him the listening post. Then I got off to Romarin where we found our old billets in the barn, the officers in the farmhouse. Slept like a log.

[The Battalion—having now finished relieving the 4th Division, who marched off to Bailleul and soon afterwards took part in the Second Battle of Ypres—entered upon the normal course of trench warfare.]

Sunday, April 18th.

Woke expecting to have a peaceful day. About midday was warned to go up to our new trenches, at present held by the 4th Oxforas, as we were taking them over tomorrow. I was to go up to see round them. You can enter these by day, so I went up in the afternoon, and got a guide from the Oxford headquarters. A short walk along the edge of the wood brought us to the communication trench, and so into the trench well to the right of our line. Moved down to this and got to our trench. This is a top-hole one, strong in front, apparently good wire, good parados in parts, not bad dugouts, and apparently never shelled by the enemy. There is also a farm called 'Anton's farm' [so named after an Engineer officer] which is held by a Platoon, and fortified (badly), as a supporting point—a bit of a shell-trap I thought. Had some food with Dashwood and Rose and then went back home the short way across the fields to the Messines Road. Then to bed at 12.30.

To Hilda.

'18. iv. 15. In the village [of Romarin].

'We are all well. We came out last night and are in a village we have been in before just out of shell-fire, resting. I am still in bed—my valise full of straw—writing these letters after a hearty breakfast. There must have been a big battle about six miles north of us last night, as the gun-fire was terrific. Good-bye dear. Thank you so much for your letter.'

[Capt. Cruttwell writes that, as they left the trenches about 7 p.m. on the 17th, the Battle of Hill 60 began very suddenly and with great violence. The sky to the N. was lit up and the rattle of machine-gun fire and rapid rifle fire was terrific.]

Monday, April 19th.

A beautiful morning. Basked in the sun at Romarin all day. Moved off about 6 p.m., and marched to Hyde Park Corner: there picked up rations and guides, and moved to

the trenches. Met Dashwood half-way there. A few bullets about, but nobody hit. Soon in and relieved Oxfords, who left No. 13 [Ronald's] Platoon in the house [Anton's Farm]: this is a poor job, for they cannot come by day, as the Germans must not know it is occupied or they would shell it. So I have to work them all night!

Quite a quiet night, we did two hour shifts by night and four hour by day. I now take up second in command in trenches, and am in charge of work entirely.

[The Battalion, after relieving the Oxfords, relieved itself, i. e. two Companies were in the firing line and the other two in support in the wood.

D Company were on the left and relieved by A. Their line consisted of two trenches called Sutherland and Oxford or, by numbers, 39 and 40 from right to left. Ronald's Platoon, 13, was first in the cellars of Anton's Farm, a ruined building with a pond, which divided the two trench sections: afterwards on the extreme right.]

To his Mother.

'19. iv. 15. Out of the Trenches. [Romarin.]

'I got your letter just as I came back from the trenches where I went up yesterday to look at the bit we take over tonight. We go there tonight instead of Wednesday. They are very safe, beautifully made, 300 yards from the Germans, and have not been shelled for months. So the prospect is rosy.

'It is so hard to write lying on the grass on one's front! It is a gorgeous day. We go in tonight for four days—then into local reserve for four, then in again for four, then back here for four days rest. You can get up to these trenches by daylight individually, but a whole Company goes up by night to save going along the communication trenches. We hear no news. I haven't seen a paper for ten days, though they do come up to us, but there are very few of them.'

Tuesday, April 20th.

We got little work done last night, though I went out with two others and carefully examined the wire. I found

it very good, though it wanted a certain amount of work on it. The morning was quiet and fine, and we simply basked in the sun. Later in the day we were rather bothered by a sniper—called Sir Charles—who made very good shooting but did no damage. We had no loopholes in his direction, and so could not spot him. That night I got a certain amount of work done, but it is not yet sufficiently systematic. Quiet night. The plan I am going on in the trench, is as [in drawing] on opposite page. Wire, parapet, parados, with dugouts inside and spaces behind, with communicating passage, carefully screened from front and flank, where we can lie, cook, &c., so all work must fit in with that idea.¹

Wednesday, April 21st.

Another lovely day. These days are much the same, so I shall take a survey of the whole time. The work is the most important thing, as I am in charge of it, and my time is filled up with it—by day getting the work organized for the night. This has got better and better, and now I have a good system. Of course it is nearly all done at night. It is curious, at 'stand to', at about 8 p.m. to hear the sniping dying down, and then suddenly the 'tap tap' of the German party starting. Then we know we are safe, as there is a kind of mutual agreement not to fire on each other's working and ration parties. So out we go and hardly a shot is fired. The men betray the usual good humour at it all and are in perfect spirits, only betraying annoyance at the absence of biscuits, and the presence of biscuits (not H. and Ps'!) They have grown quite callous, and you hear them whistling and shouting while working on the parapet, in the full moonlight. We did a good deal

¹ Among the 'Routine Orders' in Ronald's 'Field Message Book' for April 20, signed by Captain H. U. H. Thorne, is the following:—

'Lt. Palmer will be in charge of all repairs and improvements to the Trench and works. Platoon Commanders will report to him by 3 p.m. daily their suggestions. They will detail such N.C.O.'s and men as Lt. Palmer may require.'

of work in our four days. My plan was to superintend till 12.0 or 12.30, then to sleep till 'stand to' at 3.0 a.m., then sleep till breakfast at 9.0 a.m., but at times I was on duty at 4.0 a.m. or 8.0 a.m., so sleep was a bit short at the end. The sniper was active and we haven't got him yet. He knocked a hole in three periscopes, and one shot glanced off and wounded one man in Platoon 14—Bennett. There was some shelling of farms in rear and the château, but none of our trenches, and we had a kind of dress-circle view of it, so it was quite amusing.

To his Father.

'22. iv. 15. The Trenches [Tr. 40].

'Just a line before I turn in to sleep at 9.0 a.m. Here we are in our third day in the trenches. They are the ones we have permanently taken up, and the whole Brigade is now on its own with the two other Brigades of the Division on its right and left. We have splendid breast-work trenches, extremely well made, parapets beautifully bullet-proof. This was the result of three months occupation by a Territorial Regiment. They admittedly work much better than Regulars! It is a very quiet part, and has not been shelled for two months (touch wood). The last Regiment only had 22 casualties in three months.

'But there is lots of work to be done, and I am works manager for our Company. So it is interesting. You would simply love all the schemes for improvements and making dugouts and improvements for drainage, &c.

'Rations and material come up each night to us, though as a matter of fact we can get away from the trenches by day along a devious route. But we always relieve and ration across the open at night.

'Sniping is all that goes on, and in this at present they have an absolute superiority. We have constructed steel-plate loopholes but cannot find the brutes. When we do we shall have them, as we have some wonderful shots. They got one of our men in the throat last night, but it is not a bad wound. The trouble is to locate the snipers. We reconnoitred to where we thought he was last night, but he wasn't there. Aeroplane shelling and the shelling of farms is the only other excitement. I'll write better after we are relieved to-morrow night. We then go into

local reserve for four days, and that means any amount of digging parties at night.

'We heard the battle at St. Eloi last week, when we blew up a mine and captured some trenches. The sky was illuminated, and the noise of the French 75s was tremendous, also the roll of musketry.

'Your loving RONALD.

'We haven't shifted from the neighbourhood.'

Friday, April 23rd.

This evening we came out. The maxim was a bit busy, but it quieted down and all got out safely. We had to go straight back to Ploegsteert, and then back—150 of us—to dig at a part of our line, on the right, where it is being joined up and strengthened. It is only about 100 yards from the Germans, but the same good feeling prevails and we weren't fired on. In fact it is safe to walk anywhere by night. Home to Ploegsteert.

Saturday, April 24th.

Here we are placed in the local school, close to the Church. The Church has been badly shelled, and is terrible to see inside. The school has had all its windows smashed by shrapnel, but is otherwise all right. The men are very comfortable. Challoner and I lay on a mattress in a ground-floor room very comfortably. This period of four days passed very much in the same way from day to day, so I will lump it all together. On the first day I had to attend the Court-martial of — who was asleep at his post in the 'Tourist Lines'. He got five years' penal servitude, commuted by the Brigadier to three months' Field Punishment No. 1; and now he's off to hospital with his nerve quite shattered. Each night we had to dig in the same place. This was always uneventful, though one night one man had his hat shot through. By day we sat about and slept, and on one occasion we had a football match between two Platoons. I took part and we took a beating. Occasional aeroplane shelling was all we saw. This brings us to

Tuesday, April 27th. [Journal ends here.]

To R. W. Dugdale.

'24. iv. 15. In peace: Reserve Billets.

[Ploegsteert Village.]

'D. O. M.,

'We came out, after four days in, last night, and immediately went off digging, after $\frac{1}{4}$ hour's rest. The whole thing as a war is a screaming farce. This is honest fact. We went up to a part of the line near here which has a gap of 200 yards in it. Here Territorial Engineers are building a magnificent breastwork and paradoss, and Territorials supply working parties. The joke is we are 120 yards from the German trench and about 80 from the German working parties. And we make the hell of a row, laugh, talk, light pipes, &c., and sing and *nobody fires a shot*, except one old sniper who seems to fire high on purpose; and yet when the flares go up, we stand stock-still so as not to be seen!! And we of course dare not work there by day. It is a farce. If you were here now, $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the firing line in one direction and 900 yards in another, you would never know there was anything unusual on. There is no sound of guns or rifles.

'The Germans are about 550 yards away [from our front trenches] and are very quiet. They sometimes blow a motor-horn, and sometimes sing the Marseillaise and Tipperary. They started firing a maxim just before we filed out last night, but they let us go in peace.

'You will have seen in the papers about the taking of Hill 60, SE. of Ypres. The sound of the 75s firing and the musketry was awful, and the shrapnel bursting in the sky was a terrible sight. Show this to Claude and say I will write jolly soon. Y. I. f. R.'

To his Mother.

'25. iv. 15. In Reserve. [Ploegsteert.]

'Here we are very happy and peaceful. The mail didn't come in yesterday owing to great movements of troops (we are told), so I don't know if I have got any letters from you to come. But you have been awfully kind in writing so often, and it is THE great thing to get the mail in the evening in the trenches. We are in a village very much battered about with shells. The Church is in ruins though

the altar has escaped damage and the spire still remains. They shell the village at times, but haven't done so since we were here. We came out on Friday night, and go in again Tuesday evening.

'Every evening we take out vast working parties to work at a big gap in our trenches, which has to be filled. We furnish about 750 men a night, and we work in a two hours shift.

'It is Sunday to-day, and we had Holy Communion in the school-yard—the altar a pile of ammunition boxes, covered with a mackintosh sheet. It was not quite ideal because we couldn't kneel down. I should have liked it better in a field behind.

'I had a fine bath and change yesterday, not having removed my clothes for five days! nor washed, as water is a difficulty in the trenches.

'The snipers are very good shots. We had three periscopes smashed, and yet they only show 3×3 inches over the parapet and the German trenches are quite 500 yards away. But we think they have snipers in the clover in front. We hope to be able to silence them soon. But at present we can't spot them at all. We are all very well. But I don't gather the idea that the War will be over soon. I believe the Germans are very strong opposite to us.

'All your letters about St. Helens were very interesting.

'Please thank Jane for her letter, and say that I hope she will enjoy herself at Guy's. It will be lovely for her.

'Good-bye dear.

'P.S. There's a gun of ours popping off just behind this village. It makes the most awful bang each time and nearly jerks me out of the room!'

To Capt. C. P. Symonds.

'25. iv. 15. In Reserve. [Ploegsteert.]

'DEAR CHARLIE,

'Thanks awfully for yours. Yes the whistle of the approaching shell is pretty terrifying. I don't think I shall get used to it in a hurry. Luckily the trenches we hold are very quiet. They don't shell us but they smash all the farms about 400 yards in the rear into small bits, trying to find artillery observers and Batt. H.Qs. It is a pretty peaceful existence. There are a lot of gaps to fill in our line, and we work away cheerily, and the old Germans 150

yards away do the same. The Bucks are only 70 yards away in one part. As they came in the other day they heard them shout "Hullo Bucks, you've got a damned good shot in No. 15 Platoon." And so they had. The men are splendid; I have had one breakdown, a poor fellow who was twice shelled, once in the open, with fifteen shrapnel on him. His nerve went and he couldn't sleep. He never reported sick, but I found him asleep on Sentry Go. He got a big sentence but will be in hospital, and will probably be discharged. But I am PROUD of the Territorials. Their work in the trenches is INFINITELY better than the Regulars. Any good trenches have always been built by them. The Engineers say that their working parties do three times the work of Regulars. I know we always finish the job $\frac{3}{4}$ hour before time. They never grouse and in fact I'd rather have them than anybody else. I wish I had been playing hockey with you. Well Good-bye, Charlie. Try to see me when you are out. I understand May 8th is the day you arrive. And you know where I am.

'Yours affectly.'

To W. Dimpleby.

'27. iv. 15. In Reserve. [Ploegsteert.]

'We go back to the trenches to-night. All quite quiet here. The Germans shout out "Don't shoot, we are sick of this. I am a waiter at Lockhart's, Edgware Rd."'

To his Father.

'29. iv. 15. In Reserve. [Hunston North.]

'Please note that I number my letters from today, so please do the same; then you can see if *all* arrive.

'(1) It is of course quite impossible to expose yourself during the day. The sentries, of which there are very few by day, use periscopes, and they do not keep them up in the same place too long, otherwise they are shot through. But at night sniping stops. At "stand to", i.e. at dusk, when everybody is up at the parapet, sniping stops. Then you know it's safe to start, and also it's safe for the ration parties to come up, as they do right in the open. It's simply a mutual agreement I suppose.

'(2) There is then no sniping by night hardly. There

is a certain amount, but it is very wide, and you don't worry about it.

'(3) Yes I think they have had the advantage of knowing the ground. We can't trace their whereabouts yet at all. There is a house just behind our lines, and we can get there in daytime, and we have men in the roof for hours with telescopes trying to trace them. But they can see nothing.

'(4) As you say they [snipers] must come out at dawn and go back at dusk, if they are in front of their trench. But that is not certain. If we can't find them by movement we shall go out at night, and try and see if they come out, and generally reconnoitre the ground in front. This ground is getting very thick with long grass, and will soon be very good cover. It is quite absurd to see the quite immovable landscape, with no movement of any kind on it, and yet to hear the most accurate shots on our parapet, shots which have killed two men dead in the last two days, who foolishly put their heads up carelessly in a low part of the parapet to look back. Don't worry about me in this respect. I am in charge of the work and the parapet is being raised, and immensely strengthened and thickened. We are doing 50 men at it during every hour of dark, and during the day I am always thinking of it, and keeping my head down. It is only one bit of the trench about 50 yards long.

'(5) The bullets come in through the top of the parapet in one piece I think. But that is being rectified now. The rain has eroded the front face and left it a bit thin. And of course they come just over the top. Some of the shots look as if he was perched up high. But we have examined every tree with a telescope, and can't find him.

'(6) It is simpler to go out at night and conceal yourself than go up by a Sap head, though of course they often enter that way. We have a German Sap somewhere near us but it is full of water and disused. We have had instructions issued about obnoxious gases. It is a clever wheeze on their part.

'About work, I am Works Manager. During the afternoon I go with the Platoon Commanders and consider the work in their particular Section. All this work has to fit in with the general policy of the trench which we have outlined, and placed in the log-book of the trench. This work includes wire, parapet, firing steps, parados,

dug-outs, and rear communication trench and drainage. The rear trench is important as then I shall have a rear safe path by day along the trench, instead of going into the fire trench and so round the traverses.

'No, we have no instruments to detect sappers, but it is very easy to hear them, so say the Engineers. Yes, we have traced bullets by bits off two sandbags, in parapet and parados.

'How splendid of you to have a Passport. If I *ever* get leave I will wire and you will come. But at present *all* leave is out of the question. They want all the troops up at Ypres, and we have a long line to hold. Snipers are not behind our line we are sure. But you get stray bullets from behind (not in our trench luckily) because just here our line goes thus [Drawing]. But we may get bullets from A (our own men), as A is higher ground, or possibly B, but both are unlikely. You can't imagine what a wiggly line it is. In our trench I can see *flares* in the directions of these lines, and this indicates the line of trenches.

'Now I'll stop and write a line to Mother.

'I know the kind of flint implement you mean, they are funny things.

'What a sweet letter you wrote.'

The implement referred to was a curious Neolith found by Janet on Cumnor Hurst. I had sent a drawing of it. My reply, written April 28, was the last letter Ronald received from me—it was noted in his book 'Father 2nd, written Apr. 28'—although two were returned unopened. In that of April 28 this passage occurs:—

'I should have thought that kind of war dangerous as well as a farce. Yes I quite thought the German snipers must be hiding somewhere outside your trenches, so that it would be very dangerous to search for one. I should think bullet-proof armour for use when searching for them would be a very good idea.'

To his Mother.

'29. iv. 15. In Reserve. [Hunston North.]

'DARLING MOTHER,

'You will perhaps wonder why (if you read Janet's letter) we are again in reserve. Well we went to the

trenches Tuesday, and were only there one day when we were relieved by another Company and sent to reserve for three days. There has been a rearrangement, and we are now taking over a stretch of trench (the same as we were in the last four days and a bit more), and relieving by Companies, so that it is always the Berkshires who are in. So we are in a beautiful wood about 1,700 yards back. It is perfectly lovely here, absolutely boiling. I bathed today in a very dirty pond just outside the wood. We live in log shanties,¹ and eat all our meals out of doors. Our only diversions are making various wood things, such as hurdles, chairs, bowers, shelters, and pegs and stakes, and watching the aeroplanes being fired at overhead, and hearing the German shells buzzing leisurely over the wood to burst beyond us, trying to find our guns who reply as leisurely. It is funny hearing them buzzing gently overhead and then bang! Yesterday the Germans shelled a big farm about 600 yards behind us, and set it on fire. It was a fine sight to watch.

'Yesterday was a most extraordinary day. I went out of the trench after breakfast (you can get out along a communication trench by day) to see some bomb-throwing and then came back, watched this shelling, then a poor fellow [Pte. F. W. Giles] was shot and fell right on to me. Then I stayed behind to show the relieving Company the work to be done. . . . Your sweet letter of the 28th—I think you wrote it the 27th—just arrived. What a sweet letter. . . . Then I came back here, and in the wood I heard a nightingale singing more perfectly than I have ever heard it before. And so home to bed in this lovely spot.

'Good-bye darling. I am awfully well, and quite safe. . . . Yes, Battcock and a man in my Company have had a cap shot through. . . . Yes I love the little bits of news.

'Your loving son,

'RONALD.'

¹ Capt. Cruttwell writes that these huts were built by the Rifle Bde., at Hunston North, in the centre of the wood, on the E. side of Messines Road, between Ploegsteert and Hyde Park Corner. 'Here we planted a garden round the log hut which served as sleeping place and mess, wire bunks in two tiers being arranged round the walls. This was the best camp in the wood, and the safest, though bullets came along occasionally. Fatigues when in support consisted mainly of building up a gap at the NE. angle of the wood, where no defences existed.'

There is some repetition in the following three letters but they are left unchanged, being the record of the last day of Ronald's life.

To Mrs. Gripper.

'4. v. 15. In the Trenches.

'DEAR AUNTIE,

'Thank you so very much for your nice letter and for the splendid parcel. As you can imagine Bossie is already on to the filberts! The almonds and raisins are a God-send, as fresh fruit of any kind is very scarce! We are all very well. I was woken up this morning by shelling, and found we were being shelled. Kauenhoven's dugout was completely smashed in by a "little Willie", but luckily he was the *one* officer out of his dugout on duty. Old — our old drunk cook too was just out of his dugout and it was blown in. They were aiming at a house [Anton's Farm] which is part of our line, and which we use for sniping from. But they hurt nobody as nobody was in. They knocked the chimney down, and there's another big hole in the roof.

'We are doing our usual time in, and then we come out for a sort of rest, though we have digging parties every night. The weather is perfect now, and I am sitting in our dining room, which is dug well down and faces the rear. I am getting a little tired of the view of the cabbage field to our rear! The front view is more interesting but also more dangerous to look at. I hope you and Uncle Jim are all well. Give my love to him. I hear Bossie has had a letter from him.

'Yours affectionately,

'RONALD.'

To Margaret.

'5[4]. v. 15. In the Trenches.

'DARLING MAGS,

'Thank you so much for the lovely chocolate which arrived last night up here. It was sweet of you to write and also your letters are most welcome. Just as I was proceeding to open them at about 12 p.m., as I was at work all the early part of the night, we had to "stand to" as a Brigade order—that meant all being out. It was

maddening—three hours messing about doing nothing. Then I got to bed at 4.0 [a.m.] and was woken up and pulled out, because we were being shelled and it is safer to be under the parapet than in a dugout. They were shelling a house just in the middle of our trench which they think we use for sniping—and so we do. But the first four shots hit our trench. The first went right through one officer's dugout, but luckily he was the one officer on duty; so he wasn't hit. Luck! He'd have been in tiny bits! Another smashed the dugout of our cook, but he was out too. The house had what was left of its chimney piece [stack] removed, and another large hole in the roof. That's about all. Now it's lovely, as I sit in our mess, which is dug down out of sight, but has a lovely back view of the country to the rear—a large root field, a typical avenue main road to the right, a hill with a ruined château in front. I am getting a bit tired of the view. But it's safer than looking in front.

'Much love to Max and Peggie,

'Your loving RONALD.'

The following, the last letter Ronald wrote, was not posted, but found addressed among his papers returned from the front. Ronald had entered it on the list he was keeping 'Father—2—4. v. 15'.

To his Father.

'II

'4-v-15. In the Trenches.

'DARLING FATHER,

'I am afraid I have been bad at writing, and I shall answer your letter properly on Thursday when we are back at rest. We are now in our third day in the trenches, and go out tomorrow. We have had a quiet time, only having about 15 shells the first evening, aimed at the house which lies just behind the middle of our line. They suspected a sniper in there, and gave it boko. They did no damage much but one or two fell short, and one went straight into the dug-out of our Junior Subaltern who fortunately was on duty. Another fell into the cook's dugout, and he was peeling potatoes five yards away! They were "Little Willies"—about 3 in.—quite little fellows. Otherwise we have been very peaceful only it

rained a lot, and that doesn't make things very pleasant. But we have installed a splendid French oven, stolen from the aforesaid [Anton's] farm, in a kitchen dugout, by the officers' mess, and we have all kinds of roast joints and Red wine and Apollinaris water! at 1 fr. 15 a bottle! Arranging the work keeps me full up all day. Thank mother immensely for the parcel of socks, cap, &c. *But* the cap, though very nice, is not what I want. I want a *forage* cap thus:—[drawing]. The London messenger boys wear them—Fatigue Caps.

'Your loving RONALD.'

Ronald was wearing the cap at the time of his death and it was buried with him.

Telegram from Hazebrouck received 6.12 p.m., Oxford, on May 6:—

'Regret your son killed last night. Death instantaneous. Colonel Serocold.'

Ronald was as usual in charge of the working party from D Company on the night of May 4-5—the last night of the four, and he would have gone into rest on the following day. It was exceptionally dark, for the moon had not yet risen and there was a slight fog. One other Company with its own Works Manager was working simultaneously in the firing line. Sergeant Perrin, since killed, told me that Ronald had just spoken to him and had then moved on to look at another group of workers near the new officers' mess dugout in Trench 40, a prominent structure covered with corrugated iron, but never shelled. It was here, while standing on Capt. Thorne's dugout and superintending the completion of a dugout immediately in front of the mess, that Ronald was shot, at twenty minutes past midnight. The bullet entered at about the level of the third rib on the right side; Ronald said 'Oh! Oh!' and fell into the arms of Sergeant Brant. His friends Capt. Thorne and Lieut. Challoner who were with him almost at once, as well as the doctor who arrived soon after, were sure that death was instantaneous and that he suffered no pain. His expression in death was peaceful and happy.

Ronald was the first officer in his Battalion to fall, and remained the only one until the Battle of the Somme, nearly a year and a quarter later. Remembering the German methods and organization, the prominence of Ronald as a sportsman, the ease with which his unit could have been learnt, and the presence close to the front of a civilian population, through which the Germans had advanced and retired, I am unable to believe that his death was, as many have thought, an accident of war.

Ronald's body was carried, on the morning of May 5, to the Field Ambulance in the Nunnery on the Le Bizet Road in Ploegsteert Village, a mile behind the front, passing through the lines of the 1/7 Warwicks on the way. Sergeant A. C. Tomlinson of this Battalion wrote to his people in Rugby on May 9:—

'You have no doubt learnt of the death of Capt. [Lt.] Poulton Palmer. I can tell you it cast a gloom over the whole Division. In our Company he was looked upon as a personal friend and I think he was known by every man in the British Army. It cut me up terribly, the more so as he was carried through our lines. It happened as follows. Every night during our four days out of the trenches our Battalion had to be on outpost duty all night, on a barricade and in the reserve line of trenches, returning to our barn at 6.0 a.m. One night a party approached the post and was challenged. It proved to be a stretcher party. One of our officers inquired who they were carrying and the reply was Capt. Poulton. "Oh," he said, "I will go and speak to him," but when the man told him he was dead it upset him frightfully, as he knew Ronald well. He it was who told me, so I learnt of poor Ronald's death almost immediately after it occurred.'

Ronald was buried at 6.30 on the evening of May 6 in the little 1/4 Berks. Cemetery in Ploegsteert Wood. The Bishop of Pretoria wrote to us on May 7:—

'You will be getting many letters at this time, all bringing you, I know, comfort and strength in your sorrow, in the knowledge of what your boy was, not only to you but to all those he was with: we buried him yesterday evening

in a wood where everything told us of the Resurrection and New Life in the glorious outburst of a new spring. It was a beautiful service because so simple and so real: just his Company and his brother Officers and a few others who could get away.

'Before the service I consecrated the plot of ground they are fencing off for a burial place, and we sang "Let saints on earth". Then the body was brought on a motor ambulance and we laid it to rest enclosed in a coffin, simple and severe, with a crucifix on the top of it such as these good pious folk use in this part. We sang "Jesu, Lover of my Soul" and "Abide with me" at the end. For though our hearts were heavy and our eyes filled with tears, it was a message of hope which our Blessed Lord had brought us through the grave—of hope and inspiration to be our best and to reckon nothing as of moment—joy or sorrow, sickness or health, success or failure, life or death, except just one thing: to do the right thing and see it through to a finish. I don't think there was a man in the Regiment that didn't feel that if there was a man ready to go at any moment it was your boy. It was tremendously touching to see the men's faces as I spoke, and I felt it such a privilege to be there. It was only last week that I had been seeing your boy and his Company in Plug Street Wood and had had a little service for them there. Their chaplain, Mr. Helm—such a good fellow—was telling me what a tremendous help and stand-by your boy was to him in his work. "He's just a glorious chap to have by one," were his words.

'I've been out just for a few weeks and go back again in a fortnight. It's been a great inspiration and a wonderful bit of experience.

'May God help you and yours (as we prayed by the grave) to carry your load and make your sacrifice in the same spirit of forgetfulness of self as your boy made his—and it's a bigger one for you, but God will see you through, and it's *all* worth it.'

'After the service', Lieut. Challoner wrote, 'the Company presented arms and the Officers saluted. The Officers then went and saluted individually and said a little prayer for the dear fellow.'

It was a great comfort to us that the Bishop—who as Mike Furse had been a don of Trinity, Oxford, and a dear

friend of Eustace Palmer, the cousin whom Ronald loved so well—was able to conduct the funeral service.

The simple white wooden cross on the grave bore the inscription :—

R. I. P.
K I L L E D
I N
A C T I O N
LIEUT. R. W. POULTON PALMER, 1/4 R. BERKS.
5. 5. 15.

There was at the time of Ronald's burial only one other grave in the Cemetery, that of Pte. F. W. Giles, No. 3053, killed by a sniper (p. 362).

The first cross was later on replaced by one of greater strength by Ronald's Marlston friend the Rev. Frank Ford. Still later, in 1917, my son-in-law Capt. C. P. Symonds found that the Cemetery and the grave had suffered from shell-fire. He replaced the damaged and loosened cross by a still stronger one of oak.

Ronald's Oxford friend Capt. Whitnall happened to be present when the cross was first replaced.

'In August, 1916, a detachment of the Oxford Yeomanry had been sent up north of Armentières, dismounted, as a "working party" to dig trenches, gun emplacements, ammunition shelters—all to add, had we known it, their infinitesimal part to General Plumer's taking of the Messines Ridge. We were under Major Villiers, camped by Romarin corner, near Nieppe. Parties went out in various directions, happily relieved from stable parades and with the encouraging feeling that the sooner the roof was on the better shelter from desultory shelling. We visited them—either on foot, but it was too hot to walk far, or by bicycle, and there was a mount, the water-cart horse, available at times.

'On the 18th I was bicycling along the bumpy pavé which leads from the dead ruins of Ploegsteert village with the shattered red brickwork of its church, along the straight tall avenue to the foot of Hill 63, where the Messines Road turns and rises to the right—a sentry up towards the skyline: to the left a much shelled road serving the sheltered



RONALD'S GRAVE IN PLOEGSTEERT WOOD, BELGIUM.

The grave of Pte. Giles to the right. From a photograph by Lt. G. M. Gathorne-Hardy, in May 1915.

regimental H. Qs, stores, aid posts and other safe dugouts, and from which point starts the long communication trench by which you could gain the summit and spy from a gunner's observation post the clear-cut panoramic view of spectral Messines itself across the barren valley of No Man's Land. Wonderfully made trenches with a duck-board raised high above the flood of rain and revetted with corrugated iron, reflecting sweating heat as you toiled up.

'At the parting of the roads at the foot of the hill was a notice board "Hyde Park Corner". Short of this close on the edge of the main road and lying in part of Ploegsteert Wood itself was a little Cemetery of neatly arranged brown wooden crosses. At the very moment of passing I turned my head at seeing two men replacing one simple cross by another—as simple, but painted white—and caught the name. An officer of the 3rd Hussars with me exclaimed "Why, that's the name of a fellow I was with at Rugby!" and so we halted.

'One of the soldiers digging said, "The boys were very fond of him, sir, by the way his grave has been looked after, and I never missed seeing him play in London in days gone by, sir!"'

Ronald's dear friend Dick Dugdale also tried to obtain a cross to replace the original one which he intended to erect at the foot of the grave, but was prevented by the want of material; and now he too has joined his friend, killed instantaneously by an 8 in. shell, in a Regimental Aid Post of the Norfolks, near Le Cateau, on the night of October 23, 1918. 'You know I loved him more than any one else in the world,' he wrote to us when he heard of Ronald's death. His sister Mrs. H. H. Hardy remembers that 'Dick used to say, every anniversary of Ronald's death, "one year less to wait for Ronald,"' and she loves 'to think of them making up now for the three years separation.'

The Cemetery lies on the right-hand side, going north, of the Messines-Armentières Road, about 200 yards south of the well-known cross-roads called 'Hyde Park Corner' and $\frac{3}{4}$ mile north of Ploegsteert cross-roads. It is 60 miles in a direct line from Boulogne, 7-8 east of Bailleul, and $3\frac{1}{4}$ north of Armentières. The map reference is Sheet No. 28 B. 1/40,000 U. 19. b. 2. 4.

When I visited it on Dec. 20, 1918, the Cemetery, which had been fought over and in German occupation earlier in the year, bore many scars of war—craters filled with water and trees splintered and broken off. The fence and rustic gateway put up by Sergt. Beasley had disappeared. Ronald's grave was uninjured, although there were four shell-holes within a few feet of it; the oak cross was intact save for two scratches from shell splinters. Mr. Ford's cross was still there and I re-erected it at the foot of the grave. In that little plot of ground 18 units of the army were represented, including Canadians and Australians, Scotch and Irish, English of many Regiments, north and south—an epitome of the War and of that far-reaching brotherhood to which it has given new life and strength.

From Col. O. P. Serocold, C.M.G., V.D. :—

'Poor Ronald was shot through the heart: I do not think the bullet was aimed particularly at him, but he was with a working party in a spot regularly fired on by day so there may have been what we call a "clamped rifle" laid on the place, let off regularly at intervals, or it may have been one of the many stray bullets always flying about.

'Naturally Ronald was the most beloved and popular officer with all ranks, and one of those whom we could least spare. I shall miss him sorely, as he was a most trustworthy and capable officer, and would have gone high in soldiering, had he been spared.

'His death has been a terrible loss to us: he was the very best type of the young officer, always ready to do a bit more than his share of the work, and always with a smile and a joke for the men, who adored him. I see his picture, cut from newspapers, pinned up in our trenches now: they all want souvenirs of him.'

From Capt. H. U. H. Thorne, D Company (Lt.-Col., commanding 12th Battn. Roy. Scots, killed Apr. 9, 1917), writing to Mr. J. M. Wright. (From *Reading Standard*, May 15, 1915):—

'By the time this reaches you you will have heard of the death of poor Ronald Poulton, my senior Subaltern and

second in command. A German sniper shot him dead on the roof of my dugout the night before last. Mercifully death was instantaneous. I reached him a moment after he fell, but he never spoke or moved again.

‘It was a very nasty blow for us, and I personally feel intensely about it. He was idolized by the men and their grief is very severe. . . .

‘. . . He was one of the finest fellows I ever knew, and the only consolation is that he died doing his job and that he suffered no pain.’

From Capt. and Adj. Gerald M. Sharpe, in a letter to his wife:—

‘He will be an awful loss to us as he was a fine officer, and the most popular officer in the Regiment with officers and men, and his place cannot be filled again.

‘I shall miss him horribly and feel his death acutely. I liked him the best of all the officers: he was such a real good chap without the slightest bit of conceit and always ready to do anything to help anybody. He was in Thorne’s Company, and will be an awful loss to him, as he was his right-hand man. He died the finest death any man could wish for, and he suffered absolutely no pain.

‘I saw him yesterday a few hours after his death and he looked quite peaceful and happy. We buried him this evening (6th May) in the cemetery. We have suffered and he is now at rest.

‘The Bishop of Pretoria who is out here conducted the service and gave a most beautiful address about him. He knew him quite well and said that he was a man of superb character, and that whenever he was with one, one felt that you were in the company of a man who was doing you good (which is absolutely correct). He also said that “if there was anybody in the regiment who was absolutely prepared to meet death at any moment it was he”.

‘I wept like a child at his funeral, as did many of us, and the Regiment to a man will mourn his loss to the end. I was censoring a Sergeant’s letter yesterday and will tell you what he said, just to show how much he was loved by his men. His words were more or less as follows:—“I have just heard that Mr. Palmer has been killed and we are all mad about it and have vowed a vengeance on the Germans. He was our most popular officer and everybody loved him, and when our turn comes to charge the

Germans we shall do so with the name of Palmer on our lips." That is the feeling of us all. One feels more when one is on the spot, and only a few hours before he was killed I was talking to him. But it is war after all, and we must expect to lose officers and men, and the best always seem to be the first to go.'

From Lt. (now Capt.) Oscar B. Challoner, writing to Mrs. Gripper :—

'MY DEAR AUNTIE,

'I have awfully bad news to tell you in this letter. Poor dear Ronald was shot last night (early this morning 5th May) at 12.20 a.m. He was working on a dugout and I feel sure it must have been an aimed shot, and not a stray one as some say it was. It hit him on the right side just below the arm-pit and did not come out again. He died without any pain at all. Death was instantaneous, thank Heaven. It is an awful shock to me as he was my greatest pal in the Regiment and also out. Six months at your home made me realize how kind he was. The whole world has lost a friend and an upright man. If things go on as they are now, I am afraid my nerve will not last long. It has upset me as you can well guess.

'I must end now. I feel so miserable.'

From Lt. (now Capt.) C. R. M. F. Cruttwell :—

'Those of us who have known him for a long while, and loved him, can enter just a little into the grief of his own people. You will have heard the details of his death. It is a great consolation to know that he died painlessly for England, beloved by every one in his Regiment. When I went round his old Company as they stood to, at dawn, almost every man was crying. He will always be an inspiration to those of us who remain. He will be laid in the wood this afternoon in soil which is already consecrated to the memory of many brave soldiers. The oak-trees are just coming out, and the spring flowers; and the place would remind you much of the woods round Oxford.'

Only a few letters from the men of the Battalion are quoted below, for the same thoughts are repeated again and again—that he was 'one of the best', always looking

after the comfort or the safety of his men, that he treated them like a comrade, a friend, or a brother.

Sergt. W. Towner, No. 54, of Ronald's Platoon, writing to us on June 13, 1915, recalls the very spirit with which Ronald entered into the simplest of games. The words will awake echoes in the mind of many a friend who has played with him or watched him playing:—

'We have just finished a four days' rest, and it is at these times we miss our late esteemed Commander.

'Nothing he enjoyed better than a game, and it did not matter how simple the game was his whole energies were put into it, and every one playing had to enjoy it.'

Sergt. Towner also wrote to Mrs. Palmer, on behalf of all N. C. O.'s and men of the Platoon, to express their sincere sympathy 'in the loss you have sustained at the death of our most dear comrade', and speaking of Ronald's work 'for the comfort and safety of others in the trenches. This was always his special care ever since coming out here and whilst we were in Chelmsford.'

A Private in Ronald's Platoon writing to his people:—

'We all feel the loss deeply, as he was such a fine man, a splendid example of what a soldier and a gentleman should be. No better man breathed. He was more like a comrade than an Officer. We feel absolutely lost without our brave leader's cheery smile and fearless manner.'

From Pte. Norman W. Hambridge (No. 2574), in Ronald's Platoon, attached H. Q., writing to a friend in Huntley and Palmers:—

'I cannot tell you how us fellows who have been under him for the past eight months felt it. He was a real gentleman and to each one of us not only our leader but our friend. I have been out with him myself at nights between the trenches at work. He was always first over and last back, and when he met his death was still hard at work. Several times since we have been out here he has had a talk with me about the firm and the people working there.'

Another letter to a friend in the same firm written by

Pte. W. G. Atkins (No. 1553), C Coy., contains these words:—

‘We would have followed him into the jaws of death if need be, for he was a brave soldier and a gentleman and would ask no man to do any job that he dared not do himself, and was always in the front with his men when we were over the parapets sand-bagging at nights.’

That Ronald’s power as a leader was founded on the love of his men is also shown in Sergt. J. Watson’s few words quoted in the *Reading Standard* for May 15:—‘He was the finest and best loved officer in the whole Brigade, and I pity the Germans who run across his Company when there is an attack.’

The last of the memories I have selected carries us back to the trying march to the Front:—

‘I can see him now in my mind cheering his men up on the awful marches we had, when first in France, upon the endless cobbled roads of Flanders, carrying a man’s rifle because he was done up, and, when the march was finished, running about looking after their comfort before thinking of his own. Such a man and officer was Lieut. R. Poulton Palmer. His memory will always live with those few who may be left of the original Battalion of the 1/4 Berks.’

Pte. SYDNEY F. BOURTON (No. 2429).

The property over which Ronald had the power of disposition by will included only the sum for which his life was insured, the amount he had saved in a year and a half, and the contents of his house, including his car.

He left to his brother a sum to provide for the continuance of the income transferred during his lifetime. This sum had been calculated more than a year earlier, but in the meantime the rate of interest had risen considerably, and his brother transferred a portion of the bequest to his three sisters, who had been left £250 each and were the residuary legatees.

Ronald also bequeathed to the Workers’ Educational Association—£500; to the Rugby School Mission, the Huntley and Palmers’ Benevolent Fund, the Huntley and

DICK DUGDALE CLAUDE EVERS RONALD



A TRIPLE EMBRACE.

From a photograph by Rev. C. S. Donald at New Romney, probably 1911.

Palmers' Recreation Fund, and the Vicar of St. John's, Reading, for a Boys' Club or other similar institution in his parish—£100 each; to the Balliol Boys' Club and the Oxford and Bermondsey Mission—£50 each.

His motor-car he left to the Rev. R. W. Dugdale and Claude P. Evers jointly, 'in remembrance of a friendship which has given me the happiest hours of my life'. When the friends met, as they often did, at New Romney, 'the delight of living' of which Ronald wrote in 1909 must have reached its climax. The record of one hilarious moment is preserved on the opposite plate.

It is possible, I hope, that some thoughts which have brought comfort to me may be helpful to others. We have needed all the comfort we could find. Two years and a quarter after Ronald's death we lost our eldest daughter Hilda as the result of an obscure and dangerous illness—Graves' Disease—contracted in the early months of 1914. Less than two years later our youngest child Janet was killed by a fall from her bicycle due to a broken front mud-guard, the sharp hind end of which cut into the tyre and brought the machine to a sudden stop. The guard must have rusted away beneath and out of sight, for nothing wrong was noticed when, less than a fortnight before, the front tyre was replaced.

It is often said that those who have died young have escaped the sorrows of the world, but, since Aug. 4, 1914, these words have lost much of their meaning. Our dear children did not escape the deepest sorrow, but they were strong to endure and never allowed their grief to prevent them from being a joy and strength to others. It was with them all as Janet expressed it to me soon after Ronald's death—'Terrible! But I'm not going to allow it to spoil my life.' And it would have been the same with the sorrows and trials that future years would have brought them.

'It is God's will' is another thought often offered in kindly sympathy. I find no comfort in it and do not believe it to be true. On the contrary I entirely agree

with what Walter Carey said in his letter to Ronald—that God regards the War with horror and aversion and that it is so clearly the result not of His will but of human crime and human folly. And it is the same with our dear daughters. Until a disease is understood we shall never know how to prevent and how to cure it. Is it God's will that any disease should be obscure—that man should not give to its study the necessary amount of time and skill? Can any one believe it was by God's will that the treatment for phthisis in Keats's day was bleeding and starvation? And so with accident. What we call accident is the unforeseen result of a train of causation. If foreseen there would be no accident. Can it be held that it is unforeseen by God's will?

There is comfort in the thought that these and all such tragedies are incidental results of the working of a benevolent system, a system which would cease to be benevolent if there were interference for the benefit of individuals.

It is consistent with the hypothesis of a benevolent control of the universe to believe that man bears his part in a world where the same causes, under the same conditions, always produce the same results. These causes can then be studied and understood, evaded, modified or antagonized by calling other causes into operation, in fact controlled. Consider what would be the effect of interference with the links of natural causation. It would mean that the same cause under the same conditions would at one time produce one effect, at another a different effect. It would mean a world of chance—chance in truth, not what we wrongly call chance—a world where study would be useless and experience no guide. And without experience as a solid ground on which to build, how could man learn from his own shortcomings to make the world a better place for those who come after him, thus playing his part—that of a fellow-worker with God—in the development of the benevolent system in which he lives?

Even as it is, and without, as I believe, any positive evidence, man is only too prone to follow phantoms and actually to prefer a non-natural to a natural interpretation. How would he act if he had good reasons for the indulgence of these strong tendencies? He would be always appealing to the supernatural and looking for the supernatural instead of doing his duty, which is to make the best, for others as well as for himself, of the natural conditions in which he is placed.

The same line of thought carries us further and yields further help. Twice in his recently published letters¹ the late Prof. H. S. Holland spoke of the great trial of bereavement: 'The awful silence grows deeper and deeper', and again—'It seems as if it must be broken. Yet never a sound'. And in each utterance he spoke of the death that must be expected in the course of nature. Far more terrible is the silence of youth, with its joy and laughter and strength and with all its splendid promise—the silence that rends the hearts of thousands upon thousands to-day. I believe it to be a real silence, and find no comfort in the supposed instances of communication with the dead. Nothing that I have heard carries any conviction, and much of it, if true, would be humiliating. Nor is any confidence inspired by the apparatus with its human mechanism. We do not, in my opinion, require to go beyond the working, conscious or unconscious, of the human brain on earth to find a complete explanation of every supposed message.

And if the silence were broken, what then? Should we be helped or hindered in doing our duty in the world? I cannot doubt that we should be hindered. If there were real contact with our loved ones gone, above all with the young, how could we give to our life here that continuous concentrated attention which is essential if the best is to be made of it? We have for our comfort all the happy memories of the past and even these at times may be too

¹ *A Forty Years' Friendship. Letters from Henry Scott Holland to Mrs. Drew.* London, 1919, pp. 173 and 191.

poignant and may cause weakness. Human nature being what it is, if the veil were not impenetrable, we should be living in another world and could not do our duty in this. I know that it would be so with me and I do not doubt that it would be equally true of others.

We have then the comfort of feeling that the tragedy could not have been averted by a supernatural power, nor the silence broken, without disastrous change in the conditions of terrestrial life.

But we crave for more than this, we long for something more human and more intimate, and we may find it in the knowledge that to be weakened by grief is the poorest tribute to our dear ones, and that it might be so the thought that would have pained them most. At the time of Ronald's death I was numb with despair until, in a few days, this thought arose in my mind, and since then the comfort of it has never failed me: if any there be who have not yet found it, I am sure that it will never fail them. I have read of a schoolboy not yet 17, who, on the death of his brother, wrote from home, where he had gone to comfort his sister, to his father: 'I have been over [to school] every day to do the rowing, as I knew — would wish that and you too. . . . — would not wish us to grieve, but only to think of him in his peace and great glory. We are all trying to think of him here as we know he would wish us to think. . . .'

The same thoughts are finely expressed in a letter written to a friend by Lord Milner:—

'You will not fail those who are gone, and whom, could they see us now, nothing would pain so much as to know that their loved ones were overcome by grief, devastated by it. Not that they would not wish to know themselves missed, mourned. . . .

'The greatest terror death presents, in fact I think the only terror to brave men, is the fear that those they love might be crushed by losing them. We owe it to the dead, above all to the heroic dead, not to let ourselves be crushed; saddened we must be . . . but not broken, not

weaker, or less resolute to fight out to the end what is truly the Battle of Life.'

We cannot fail to find help when we realize that the comfort we receive is, on its other side, loyalty to our loved and lost.

The story of Ronald's life is brought to its close with the words of the Master of Balliol in his time—the late J. L. Strachan-Davidson :—

'Thank you very much for sending me the little notice of Ronald. It is most comforting to see how in new surroundings he was still the dear boy whom we know, and that his personality impressed itself so deeply on his comrades.

'I have expressed my feelings as to those who have fallen in a short prayer for our morning Family Prayers in chapel. Perhaps you may care to see it, so I have written it out.

'O God with whom do live the spirits of just men made perfect, we give thee thanks for our brethren, the members of this College, who have willingly offered themselves and have laid down their lives for us and for our country and for the liberty of the world. Give us grace so to follow their good example that we may never lose heart, but may bear with patience and courage, as these have done, whatever thy Providence calls upon us to endure. Comfort the bereaved, and grant to all of us that our afflictions may purify our hearts and minds to thy glory.

'Through Jesus Christ our Lord.'

APPENDIX

IT has been explained in the Preface that the contents of this Appendix, intended to be included in the sections to which they rightly belong, were in the end regretfully omitted in order to prevent the too-great length of any part. They are here placed under headings corresponding with their sections and arranged in the order of the book.

THE O.P.S.: 1897-1903

From G. C. Vassall.

'My own grief is so great that nothing comes to my mind except the one thought that Ronald has gone. Indeed I loved him. He was one of the first boys with whom I really felt the wrench of parting when he left the O.P.S., and we have sat next each other at every Old Boys' Dinner he has attended since then. I can never hope to fill the gap in my life which the loss of one of my best friends has made, but his memory will live for ever to help and strengthen us in many weak moments. What a life his has been. My admiration and love for him have increased each time we met, and I realized what the growth in Ronald had been since the last time we had talked together. It is too sad to think of his unrealized dreams and ambitions. Of course one knows that he himself would have been the last person to complain in any way at whatever might have happened, and I try to comfort myself with that thought.

'His genuine interest in the School and the loyal and devoted way in which he came back at any and every opportunity, left its mark on many Dragons: he was a hero to them all, and the small boy is never mistaken in his estimate of his seniors.

'My many conversations with him later in life when he came to me time after time for advice during his years at Balliol and afterwards were too intimate and are too

precious memories for me to be able to detail them. The honour he did me in coming to me helped, I hope, to make me feel very humble. I know I am a better man for having known Ronald, and I am more than proud of having been admitted into the circle of his friends.

'I have two very vivid recollections: (1) The keen delight with which he told me (and I listened to) his account of a motor-bike ride from somewhere to somewhere, during which he used a wayside heap of stones as a bed [p. 154]. It was splendid. (2) Of an Old Boys' Dinner (I kept a place for him next me whenever he was present) at which I had to propose the health of and he had to reply for "Our Blues". His reply began with—"I have only had one piece of advice about the making of speeches, given me by an American, 'If you don't strike ile within two minutes, stop boring'." It brought down the house. The speeches were described in the subsequent "Draconian", as "the rottenest of the evening as speeches, if speeches meant well rounded, well balanced sentences, etc., but the success of the evening if speeches were intended to promote good fellowship and cheeriness".

'Another vivid memory is of an "iron" shot of 140 yds. at Frilford, out of a bunker in which I had landed him. It placed us within two feet of the pin, and won what looked like a lost hole. His smile was as good to see then as it was when I found him in a steaming hot bath after his last International Match at Twickenham.

'How I loved him: as far as I was concerned, it was like losing a brother.'

RUGBY: 1903-1908

I expect it would be impossible to count the people who are the better for having known him.—MRS. ST. HILL.

The day is very depressing. We need your good spirits to enliven us.—From his MOTHER in the Advent Term of 1904.

One who often raced against Ronald and was for two years next to him in the competition for the Athletic Cup, recalls memories of him as an athlete.

From the Rev. S. E. Swann, C. F., formerly President of the Cambridge University Boat Club and Bow in the University Eight of 1911, Stroke in 1912, No. 2 in 1913:—

'My first memories of him are when he won all the

shorter under 16 events at the sports ; but the first time he spoke to me I believe I held my head two inches higher ! All we fags made him our hero at sight.

‘My first year in the open events, quite unconsciously, I turned up for the half mile in Running-Eight clothes (I chose them as being lighter). When we were lined up for the start all the stewards fell upon me and I should have been sent home very disconsolate and shame-faced if Ronald had not most energetically refused to have me disqualified. He thereupon beat me soundly by 20 yards ! But from that moment I more than admired him. It was just the same generous spirit which made him stop for a moment in the open steeple-chase and apologize for a collision which was entirely my fault. Where he got the breath to do it I don’t know—my reply was no more than a grunt ! He was priceless. He was always doing that sort of little thing.

‘As small hero-worshippers we always fondly believed that inside his “all black” football boots (a sensation, then, in themselves) were fitted springs to help him round those stupendous swerves of his ! Oh, yes, we knew it for a fact—a School House fag had told us so !’¹

From the Rev. William Temple.

‘I knew Ronald first just before he went to Rugby ; we met, I think, in the Parks ; he was with Teddie, who introduced us. I believe I was beginning my third year at Balliol ; he was about 14. I did not think much about it at the time, but later on I realized that from the very start, and in spite of our totally different ages, that very close understanding, which was to be so great a treasure, already existed. Looking back on our friendship I realize that a great deal of our intercourse was unspoken, and one can’t record conversations that did not take place. The spoken words between us were very largely far too light-hearted and flippant to bear being even written, much less printed.

¹ One of Ronald’s fags at Rugby writes from Africa :—

‘The myth you mention, that he had springs in his boots, probably arose from his wearing studs instead of the usual bars on his boots. These studs saved him from “skidding” in his swerve along the touch-line in wet weather when the ground at Rugby became a sea of mud. Among school boys this sort of myth springs up very easily round a local hero.’

'From the first I saw him at steady intervals, both at Rugby, where I was still in the habit of going at least twice a year, and in Oxford where both of us had our homes. But the first time that I saw much of him for any continuous stretch was, I think, the first time that he came to the Rugby Mission Camp at New Romney in 1905 and the first time that he was in the Lakes with Harry Hardy,¹ in 1907 [p. 93]. It was the Lakes and New Romney together that finally assured our friendship.

'His success at Rugby was, of course, extraordinary. He was, very early in his career, a conspicuous figure. Early prominence at school is a great test of character. One feared for the moment that his head must be turned. And for a short time it was to a very small degree. I remember that in the Lakes I thought I detected some signs of self-centredness which were quite new. It was natural to him to be the centre of every group that he was in because people naturally and spontaneously accepted his leadership. Before and after this time he took this position with a complete lack of self-consciousness; but just at that time he was disposed to assume, and even to claim it, consciously. I remember my fears that his success would spoil him, and my hopes that when responsibility was added to success it would be enough to restore the balance. Whether it was responsibility or not—he became one of the two captains of the School XV in Advent Term 1907—that did what was needed, the symptoms I had feared entirely passed away during the next year. That it should have appeared and then vanished is, I think, more wonderful than if it had never appeared at all.'

From C. P. Evers, Ronald's greatest friend among the masters:—

'I have often thought it strange that people who come to know each other very well often live quite close to each other for a long time without either being aware of the

¹ H. H. Hardy, who arranged the party, thought what a good opportunity it would be for bringing Dick Dugdale and Ronald together. He found Dick in the San. and told him that he was thinking of asking Ronald. 'I've never met him,' said Dick, 'but I know that he's a topping fellow.' Ronald, who was watching his side playing cricket, replied in exactly the same way—he had never met Dick but knew that he was 'a topping fellow'.

other's existence. Ronald and I talked of this once or twice. For I was at Oxford for five years and was constantly near to him in the Parks without knowing of him—and then three years later he came to Rugby, and an acquaintance began which grew to a lasting, and to me a very precious, friendship.

'For his first two years at Rugby I did not see a very great deal of him. I had only been a School House tutor for a year when he came, and a large number of new boys came the same term as he did; so being conscientious I tried to get to know all of them just a little, and I did not see more of him than of others. Moreover, he seldom, if ever, was in "Prep" in the evening, so there was no chance of seeing him at his work. But his promise at football of course marked him out among his contemporaries. Also, he appeared very determined about his work and he went ahead steadily. I remember discussing him and his promise with other School House tutors. I can recall too the way he used to walk. I can see him now coming out from under the School House arches, with his books, to go into school. It was rather a shy kind of walk—I have often since seen him go in to bat in just the same sort of way. In these early days he struck me as being very quiet, though that may only have been because I did not know him very well. He was always a very jolly boy to ask out to meals on the sort of occasions when three or four School House boys used to come to breakfast or tea, and I remember talking about him with my wife in this connexion when he had been at Rugby a term or two. He was always perfectly simple and natural with older people and seemed to have the knack of being able to say the right thing without any effort. With many—perhaps most—boys of 15, a master does not find it easy to hit on a fruitful topic of conversation. But with Ronald there was never the slightest difficulty: both of us used to find it perfectly easy to talk.

'I think I must have got to know him well during the summer of 1905, for I remember thinking that he would be an excellent fellow to get to join our Mission Camp at New Romney. So I suggested this to him, and he came. I think he would have come in any case, for his brother came that year and one or two more Rugbeians whom Ronald knew.

'From 1905 onwards I began to see more and more of Ronald. I always took an interest in the games, and when

he began to play for the XV I naturally used to see a good deal of him. And I often, in the Summer Term, used to bowl to him, sometimes at his invitation, at the nets. He used to come in to meals as often as I could decently ask him—which was not very often—and I always used to look forward to his visits. I gradually became more and more attached to him and in a variety of ways contrived to see a good deal of him. This was not very easy, because masters and boys can't see much of each other individually at school without exciting comment. I hardly ever, during the whole time, went into his study in the School House, though as one of three School House tutors I was constantly in the house. He was not my own pupil and when he "specialized" in Science he ceased to have a regular House tutor, but I remember arranging surreptitiously with the School Marshal that his particular half term report should always be sent to me, so that I should have a chance of a talk with him about it in the School House: so on one or two occasions I went and sat in his study.

'Gradually he became the most prominent boy in the school, but no successes ever made—then or later—the slightest difference to him. He was entirely unaffected by fame: it came to him unsought and he accepted it at its proper value. I kept what I think was the first letter he ever wrote me [see p. 111] because I was touched at the idea of his wanting me to meet him at the station at Camp. It was, I think, unusual for a boy to ask a master a good deal older than himself to come and meet his train. But from him it was perfectly natural and I loved him for it, and tramped the two miles, after a hasty lunch, gaily, to have the first chance of seeing him.

'Whether Ronald was "popular" at Rugby, in the boys' sense of the term, I am not sure. I am inclined to think that he was not. Of course he was tremendously admired, especially for his athletic prowess. But he never courted popularity; he kept very much to a small circle of friends and he was always inclined to be shy with those whom he did not know well. The result was that he appeared to be rather aloof. Moreover he worked hard, a thing which popular heroes don't do. Perhaps more than all he was very strict, almost Puritanical, in his views. He was looked upon as being "pi", and he, unconsciously, exacted the same standard from those whom he made his friends. Nothing that was the least bit questionable could even be hinted at in his presence. He always did his duty sternly

as a member of the VIth, but, as he himself told me after he had left Rugby [see p. 66], he had no real knowledge of any of the moral dangers at school from which he might have to guard himself or others. He left Rugby as innocent of all knowledge of evil as he was when he went there. In a way too his very success as an athlete prevented him from being popular. The School House, by reason of its size and traditions, is always disliked by the rest of the school and there is always rejoicing when the School House is beaten in games. But often Ronald gave other Houses no chance. Three years in succession (if my memory is not at fault) he won the Wrigley Cup for athletics for the School House. Other competitors were almost invariably beaten. And the same thing was true during his last year in football and cricket as well. He was such a giant that he made every one else look and feel very little dwarfs.

‘I did not often discuss serious subjects with him in those days—not nearly as much as I have done since with boys whom I knew less well. Perhaps this was because I was then rather a junior master—the youngest of the School House tutors—and myself only beginning to feel my way. Besides, Ronald’s presence always induced brightness and light-heartedness. We had lots of jokes and fun. I remember his look of amused surprise when he came in to supper one Sunday and found that I had put his knife at the left of his plate. He said that for two years or more he had sat next the same fellow at meals in the School House, and his neighbour had never noticed that he used his left hand for his knife. We had great fun too in the summer at the cricket nets.

‘Another little memory was the pace at which he dressed for early Chapel in the morning. His dormitory looked down on to the quad, and when I entered it at about 3 minutes to 7 on a summer morning I used to see Ronald through the open window in all stages of undress, anxiously looking down from time to time to see whether he was going to be in time. How he managed to escape being late I don’t know, but he always arrived in time—by the smallest possible margin. I believe “quick dressing” was one of the many records he held at Rugby.

‘By the time Ronald left Rugby I had got to know him very well; but, though we had lots of pleasant intercourse, our relations remained quite formal and official. I don’t think I ever called him by his Christian name all the time

that he was at school. But the following letter which he wrote to me from St. Helens on Aug. 7th, 1908, a few days after he left Rugby, completely swept away all barriers of formality:—

“MY DEAR CLAUDE,

“(I don't see why I should call you Mr. Evers any more), I hope this letter will find you, tho. unshaven and unwashed, and perhaps eaten by gnats, yet enjoying yourself all the same. The weather has been topping, tho. it is rather stormy to-day. And I only hope it will be fine next week. I won't miss a train as I did last year if I can help it. But if I should do so I shall be able to telegraph in time to you. Don't bother to meet me if you have anything better to do. But if you have nothing it would be awfully nice.

“I really can't thank you enough for the good time you have given me at Rugby. For I have had the best five years that I can imagine, and the pleasure depends entirely on the people one comes across. And thank you so much for the gold match box. It was awfully kind of you to give it me, and it is a pleasant remembrance.

“I hope you left Sybil and the baby very well. I hope Sybil won't have forgotten me when I come down next. Bye the bye will you have room to spare to put me up for the House Supper—Saturday to Monday—as I should like awfully to come and stay.

“Yours affectly,

“RONALD W. POULTON.”

‘I kept the letter—I wish I had kept every letter that he wrote me—because it was such a delight to get it. The opening sentence was really, under the circumstances, a very extraordinary thing. I was 13 years or so older than he was, and a married man with a family. I had been until about a week previously in a position of official authority over him, and (as far as I know) he had not met many people then who called me by my Christian name. But it was he and not I who began this mark of intimacy. If such a letter had been found in a novel or a school story it would have been regarded as quite impossible and hopeless drivel! But, naturally, I did not like him—love him I should more truly say—any the less for it! So, by his action, we jumped at once to a very close and intimate relationship.

‘Whenever I was depressed, as I often used to be by overwork or failure of some sort, Ronald’s presence—even for an hour or two—was like a tonic. I can remember this happening over and over again. He was always the one person whom I wanted to see at such times. I could talk to him quite freely about everything, for though he was so much younger he always seemed just the right age. And he always understood and sympathized.

‘We had some delightful times together—though they were generally all too short—after he left Rugby. I remember well coming over to Wykeham House for lunch just before the beginning of his first Oxford term and spending an afternoon with him in a canoe near (I think) Marston Ferry; we talked a lot of the past and future. Then came his first visit to us at Rugby, and a delightful week at St. Helens at Easter 1909. Several times I stayed with him at Oxford, and I used to go to ‘Varsity matches or Internationals to see him as often as I could.

‘More than once also we stayed together in London for the Rugby and Marlborough match, and we had a few days’ golf at Hayling Island three years ago. That was almost the last time that I was with Ronald for any length of time. We shared a bedroom.

‘Ronald on these occasions was always just as he had been when he was a boy—just as simple and unspoiled. The only difference noticeable was a steady mental development, a growing breadth of view and a power of mastering all kinds of subjects.

‘I am proud and glad to know—what I did not ever doubt—that he valued our friendship, which had been to me for years past one of the great joys of life—ever since I first remember him here as a small boy. Rugby is full of happy memories of him, as we knew him and loved him as a boy and as a man. And to these memories we shall always cling, for, thank God, no evil that can befall us can ever take them away. They at least are imperishable.

‘And the thought that Ronald lived and was what he was, and brought such joy to so many is a fact to buoy up one’s faltering faith just now. Such as he could never be the creation of chance or any blind force.

‘He is in my thoughts all the time, and I feel that he can’t somehow be far away even now.

‘There will never be another like Ronald.’

From the Rev. Dr. James, President of St. John's College, Oxford, Ronald's Headmaster and Housemaster :—

'I could not have had a greater affection for him if he had been a son instead of a pupil. It is the worst of all the blows this unhappy war has brought me. It is not a personal loss only—it is a loss to hundreds over whom his simple, manly nature and his interest in all human needs and lives had brought him so much influence. Never was a life to which success and prosperity brought so much temptation, so many inducements to idle and to amuse himself, yet which was so absolutely unstained by self-seeking or conceit of any kind.'

From the *Meteor*, May 28, 1915, p. 120 :—

'After Kenneth Powell, RONALD POULTON; and his place can never be filled; for to his friends (and they were many) he did, in quite a peculiar way, sum up a generation and realize an ideal. Few have known so fully the joy of life; fewer still have had such a genius for communicating it to others. Even the crowds who flocked to cheer him on the football field were conscious of a personal charm and loved the man in the athlete. In those amazing runs that he used to make, runs that took him in and out amongst his opponents and seemed to leave them standing, there was no suggestion of the stress or fierceness of combat; it was all a sheer joy, and the spectators laughed while they roared applause. And there was something of the same astonishing ease about the way in which he did the things and made the sacrifices which for most of us involve a world of self-conscious effort. And yet, not astonishing; for the secret of his charm and of his influence lay in the ready and ever widening sympathy which impelled him, without a touch of affectation or condescension, to share his own happiness and strength with all who needed a friend. And so nothing could change or spoil him; on the day of his death he was exactly what he had been in the Rugby days—brave, unselfish, and unassuming, happier kicking about a football with the Notting Hill boys than winning an International match. . . .'

From a sermon in memory of Rupert Brooke and Ronald, preached in Rugby School Chapel, May 9, 1915, by the

Rev. A. A. David, Headmaster, and printed by request of the Sixth Form:—

‘We have indeed given of our best. If we were asked to describe what highest kind of manhood Rugby helps to make I think we should have him in mind as we spoke of it.

‘God had endowed him with a rare combination of graces, and given him an influence among men such as very few in one generation can possess. What had we not hoped would come of it!

‘There are those here and in Notting Dale, in Oxford, in Reading, and in his Battalion, who will be better men all their lives and do better work because he was their friend—*is* their friend.

‘Strong and tender and true, he lived for others and for others died.’

BALLIOL: 1908-1911

Ronnie is here and as usual is the light of the house.—From his MOTHER to Janet at School, March 7, 1910.

Ronald is the first of my students to give his life for our country. He was first all his life, in all he undertook.—Prof. C. F. JENKIN.

From Capt. L. R. Broster, R.A.M.C.

‘One little incident I remember very well. In our day Trinity and Balliol were great rivals and used to make many a night hideous by singing traditional songs across the party wall to each other, the main feature of which was to impress on the other side the fact that they could not row. When Ronald had refereed in the Jesus (Cambr.)-Trinity match and was the guest of the evening at the dinner, the traditional Trinity-Balliol feud required that he should be received with jeers from all sides, to which he replied by declaring that “Balliol was the only visible means of support possessed by Trinity”—in fact that Trinity’s entire reputation was derived from next door!’

From the Rev. Neville Gorton.

‘In many ways he was the most extraordinary person I ever met. What struck one most in his character was that all his qualities seemed perfectly natural and spon-

taneous—entirely effortless. Other people struggled after improvement, but his goodness seemed a natural part of himself, like his health or the way he played any game. And it was this apparent effortlessness with which he was Ronald that gave the indescribable charm to everything he did and was. He more nearly fulfilled the Greek ideal *καλὸς κἀγαθός* than anybody I knew. There was something essentially beautiful in everything he did and in his whole character. I think it was this which marked his football and everything about him, and was distinctive of him or of the impression I and others had of him. It was a real aesthetic pleasure one always took in anything one saw him do. It accounts for the real joy he was to his friends. One always half-smiled with a kind of pleasure when one spoke of him even.

‘He was the greatest athlete of his day—the most popular person in the University. I never remember anything approaching snobbishness or side: yet it is a fallacy to think the great athlete is modest;—he scarcely ever is. He never spoke of himself or his achievements. I never saw him lose his temper. I never heard him say an unkind or disparaging thing. But his goodness was not negative: it was of an extraordinarily positive kind. What struck one most was his unbounded spirits and energy, but it was never mere animal spirits. Wherever he went he had the power of spreading an atmosphere of a very definitely spiritual kind. He came into a room of depressed or nervy quarrelsome people and changed the whole atmosphere. It was like opening the window and letting in fresh air and sunlight. One got to expect this from him and to depend on him for it.

‘He had the power of inspiring an extraordinary personal affection in all his friends—and they were legion—but also a kind of pride which we all took in his friendship, not because he was a great athlete or anything of the kind, but just because he was Ronald.

‘There are so many times we had together, great days they are now to look back upon, that it is difficult to pick out things:—evenings in the quad. after Hall when he used to improvise rag games of which he was the soul—days on the river and in the backwaters in punts and canoes. We had a great time every year on May morning, starting after hearing the hymn at sunrise on Magdalen Tower, in two four-oared racing boats with sliding seats, to get down to breakfast at Sandford—eight non-rowing men wildly racing

down the river cheered by the townspeople. We never upset, and I can't think why.

'There was a great game of football when the Boys' Club officers, etc.—mostly Rugger people—challenged the College Soccer XI at their own game. I think I was centre forward, Ronald centre half, and Neville Talbot yelling encouragement from goal. I remember that we all, disregarding the ordinary tactics, followed up *en masse* to the enemy's goal and all fell back to defend our own, and completely routed the Association team. The score would have been about 10-0 if we had been able to shoot. They had some good players. Cardew, the 'Varsity Secretary, was centre forward and the remarkable thing was that Ronald at half completely outplayed him at his own game and had him bottled up throughout. The defeat was a very sore subject for some time. They said we didn't play the game.

'Ronald enjoyed riding a bicycle in Oxford without bell or brake as a kind of sport, and I have seen him charging desperately on to a pavement with his foot on the front wheel, trying to avoid more serious danger.'

Mr. Gorton too speaks of Ronald's buoyant humour and how a sudden recollection of the peculiarities of men he really loved would send him off into roars of laughter; how even in a little circle for Bible study his infectious sense of humour nearly brought disaster once or twice. Mr. Gorton remembers meeting Jerry Portus, the Australian football player, at dinner with Ronald.

'They were both in the wildest spirits and performed endless parlour tricks—entering the room simultaneously and sitting down backwards together with hands in their pockets, and performing numbers of tricks on chairs and tables.

'How utterly inadequate all this is. It is all the little things which matter, and one can't get them down—his high infectious courage, buoyancy of spirits, straight-living, keenness, honesty, showing itself in everything he looked or said or did, the absence of any kind of petty meanness, vanity or weakness which everybody else seemed to have somewhere and he was so amazingly free from. I can remember his look of occasional slight surprise at seeing them in other people he loved, and how it went into one.

It is the way he would take one by the arm and greet one with his look, his quiet sympathy when one was depressed or ill—though illness or depression in others puzzled him I think because he never seemed to feel either himself, but this did not make him impatient. Then to see the way the Club Boys and in fact every one who came in contact with him looked at him and up to him. And his influence remains a part of oneself now, and helps to form one's ideals for oneself and for others—especially at a school, when one prays the boys round one may find something of Ronald for themselves. He was the finest typical product of the Public School, and his life will always be an inspiration to British school-boys everywhere.'

FOOTBALL: 1909-1914

One would never have guessed in talking to him that he was the idol of the whole youth of Britain, and I don't know that higher praise can be given to any one at his time of life.—C. COOKSON, Fellow and Tutor of Magdalen.

Capt. C. M. Gilray, writing of Ronald's first Inter-'Varsity match in 1909, remembers

'how modest he was about his own part in the match, how anxious that the much smaller parts played by others of the side should not be overlooked. He was ever so.

'I never left him even after a train journey from Paddington on a Saturday night after a match, without feeling what a privilege it was to have been with him. Oxford was a greater and better experience because he was there.'

The following players in Ronald's three Inter-'Varsity matches have given their lives in the Great War:—

1909. *The Oxford Team*:—T. Allen, R. H. M. Hands, R. O. Lagden, R. W. Poulton, F. N. Tarr, F. H. Turner. *The Cambridge Team*:—M. L. Atkinson, R. Fraser, B. H. Holloway, B. R. Lewis, W. D. C. L. Purves (Captain).

1910. *The Oxford Team*:—D. McL. Bain, W. P. Geen, R. O. Lagden, R. W. Poulton, and F. H. Turner (Captain). *The Cambridge Team*:—P. C. B. Blair, R. Fraser (Captain), B. R. Lewis, L. A. M^cAfee.

1911. *The Oxford Team*:—D. McL. Bain, A. J. Dingle, W. P. Geen, A. Gilmour, R. O. Lagden, R. W. Poulton (Captain), S. S. L. Steyn. *The Cambridge Team*:—P. C. B. Blair, B. R. Lewis, C. Thorne, J. G. Will, A. H. Wilson.

The Oxford players include the entire three-quarter line—Steyn, Dingle, Poulton, Geen.

Coming to International football, Mr. F. J. Sellicks tells me that he often noticed how Ronald—and every one who knew him will also know that it was characteristic—‘would do all in his power to make the working-men members of the English Team feel at home, and would make a special point of walking and talking with them’.

Mr. C. M. Byham remembers an amusing and characteristic episode in Ronald’s training for the match with Wales in Jan. 1913:—

‘One little incident occurs to me, proving Ronald’s absolute want of “swank”, and at the same time his love and interest in British boyhood. He and L. G. Brown were my guests for some days prior to the memorable International with Wales on the “Cardiff Arms” Ground. One evening we went outside my gates and started kicking Ronald’s football, dribbling and passing it from one to the other. Suddenly we noticed a black mass which turned out to be boys—we were playing by the light of a single gas lamp. “Hulloa!!” said Ronald, “we can now have quite a good game. Come on, boys, fall in,” which they did with alacrity. We picked sides and started off and a real good game we had. After a bit the boys took off collars, ties, and coats and entered into the game with renewed zest. Presently a stentorian voice shouted out “Now then, you boys, when are you coming in for practice?” No reply from the boys who with bated breath still continued their endeavours to learn Rugby football; and right well they took their tosses and laughed over them. Never had they enjoyed a “practice” more. And they did not give over until Ronald, L. G. Brown, and myself had to return home for bath and dinner. The stentorian voice happened to belong to the choir-master of the neighbouring church and our fellow footballers were his choristers.’

The following brief record of the wonderful Liverpool

team in the season 1913-14 has been kindly drawn up by Mr. George Leather of Liverpool :—

' *Full Back*: E. H. Cowan (Lt., R.G.A., died in training, Feb. 1916); *Three-Quarters*: R. R. Jackson (Capt., King's Liverpool Regt., M.C., killed Nov. 1917), J. E. Ross (Capt., King's Liverpool Regt., killed May 1916), R. W. Poulton (Lt., R. Berks., T.F., killed May 5, 1915), T. W. Lloyd (Maj., R.E., D.S.O.); *Half-Backs*: R. A. Lloyd (Capt., Liverpool Scottish, wounded), G. B. Davey (Lt., Liverpool Scottish, M.C.); *Forwards*: F. H. Turner (Lt., King's Liverpool Regt., killed Jan. 11, 1915), T. G. Fowler (Sub Lt., R.N.), H. H. E. Royle (Lt., King's Liverpool Regt.), J. G. Grant (2nd Lt., Liverpool Scottish), R. Cunningham (Lt., Liverpool Scottish, wounded), C. G. R. Hill (Capt., King's Liverpool Regt., M.C. and bar), J. Clegg (Lt., King's Liverpool Regt.), G. K. Cowan (Capt., Liverpool Scottish).'

Mr. Charles Marriott tells me that, if Ronald had decided to play in the season 1914-15, there is no doubt that he would have again held the captaincy.

Would he have so decided? Some time before his last season he told me that he would be glad to be made Captain, because, after that, he would be content to give up the game. Ronald also told his brother that the Saturday games in London took him away from the boys and men in Reading, and that he thought of taking up hockey which he could play for the Factory and with them. On the other side there were all the varied and happy experiences of the 1914 season. His brother and I believe that he would have played football for at least one more year.

THE READING BOYS' CLUB: 1912-1913

The following account of a meeting of the Club on May 7, 1915, was written in the Log by the Rev. R. W. Morley :—

'The saddest day the Club has known. We could not hold a Club; no one felt like it. Dimpleby told us all

how it happened. Every one knew that our President who had meant so much to us and to our Club had been shot and instantly killed in the trenches. . . . All Reading is mourning him ; but what of us ? No one can replace him for us in his fine manliness, warm sympathy, and absolute integrity of character. We all respected him, and more, loved him and longed to be like him. Never has the Club been like it was tonight while Dimpleby spoke to us of him, his character, his ideals, his religion—how keen he was on our prayers—and called us to be like him. It was what was in our hearts. We felt there was little we could do, who wanted to do so much, but if the body was brought home, all the lads wanted to send some little token of their esteem in the shape of flowers ; and, in any case, we decided to write a letter of sympathy signed by all the members of the Club.'

The letter was drafted and signed on the following Monday by Horace Harding, A. Heath ('Tatcho'), and E. Pocock, of whom the first two have been killed in the War. It was also signed by twenty other boys who were present and by the caretaker. It is printed below just as it was written :—

' Albert Road Lads' Club.

' Newtown.

' Reading.

' 10. 5. 1915.

' DEAR MADAM,

' We the undersigned members of Albert Road Lads Club, wish to tender our deepest sympathy to you for the loss of your son whom we were honoured to have as our President.

' Since being to the Albert Road Club their was a marked improvement in the life there.

' When at Camp Mr. Poulton Palmer lived soley for our interests and pleasure. He was a true President in every sense of the word, being not only an organiser, but a sympathiser in our troubles, a thorough Sportsman, and a Gentleman.

' We shall miss him very dearley.

' Our sorrow being great, we understand yours being much greater. In deepest sympathy.

' We remain

' Yours respectively.'

OUTBREAK OF WAR: CHELMSFORD

Mr. Herbert Gripper has recalled memories of Ronald at Redcot:—

‘Your letter gives me the opportunity I have been wishing for. I know how much you must treasure in your memory his life and its doings and how probably the sudden call in August separated him from you more than ever before.

‘I have repeatedly myself, especially on Sunday evenings, talked with him, and heard from him what good he hoped to do to the people around him, and I gathered long before he left that if he was spared he would lay himself out for a life mainly for the benefit of others. This was apparent by his actions outside the immediate regimental duties. He showed clearly the very serious view he took of life generally. I think he looked upon his military service as an episode only in his career, as he once told me he disliked soldiering, and after the war would give it up. As it was, his influence for good in the regiment was quite evident, on officers and men alike, especially on those in direct contact with him.

‘On the cause and effect of the war he and I often talked, and I never once heard him speak lightly or thoughtlessly on these subjects as so many do. Indeed I may say his opinions were most valuable, as it was evident his mind probed deeper than that of the ordinary man, at any rate of my acquaintance.

‘Once when I was telling him about my own father, who is dead, he burst out with a most affectionate and devoted tribute to you as his father. It was most touching and beautiful.

‘When we parted I think we both felt much more than we could speak about. I clearly saw the man going to his duty for his country’s sake, fully aware of the peril but unshaken by it. My wife and I look upon his life with us as a remarkably beautiful though, alas! a passing event. It has left a mark upon us and we shall ever remember Ronald with love and with the deepest regret that he will not come back.’

Mrs. Gripper has kindly told me of Ronald’s talks with her on serious subjects:—

‘I have such a bad memory that you have set me a very difficult task to tell you what Ronald and I discussed

when he was at tea with me. He and Bossie were very seldom both in at tea together, except on Sundays. Most of our discussions were on religious subjects, but sometimes the war. He said he felt it to be his duty to fight, but he ached to be back at his own work—his boys were so much more interesting, you could be friends with them without infringing discipline—and he felt it very much that he had to keep his men at arm's length. He also said he did not want to die; he had everything on earth, such loving friends, such opportunities for work for others when he returned, that he could not imagine anything better in Heaven.

'Towards the end of his time here (during Lent) our junior priest preached a course of sermons on "The Life of the Waiting Soul in the intermediate state" which keenly interested him. I had to tell him all about each one. It was always—"Well, Auntie, what is it this week?" The question that interested him most was what we should have to occupy us in Paradise, and that the rich man in the narrative of Lazarus could remember, be conscious, and reflect, and the idea of preaching to less fortunate souls was a new one to him. He thought Mr. Wright an extraordinarily brave man to tackle such a question.

'Ronald went with me to church on March 24th to hear Stainer's "Crucifixion": it was new to him, and he enjoyed it immensely, except the hymn part where the congregation join in. He thought that took some of the reverence away. I had the music, which he loved to play afterwards, and his great delight on Sunday evenings was to play hymns. His favourite one, after "Abide with me", was "For all the Saints".

'I have never discussed these matters before I did so with Ronald, not even with my husband—we are such reserved people—but it was Ronald's charming ways that made one forget to be self-conscious.

'Our serious times were comparatively seldom—only when he came in to tea, and I was alone. At all other times he was full of fun, and for that reason I did not like his latest photographs. I had never seen him without his sunny smile.

'Although we have only known him seven months, we shall always feel it was a great privilege to have had him in our home life as long as that. His was a most fascinating personality.'

It has been impossible in this book to quote more than a very small proportion of the letters and messages of kindly sympathy which we received, but I cannot altogether omit those from our friends at St. Helens who had known Ronald throughout his life. The words written by Mr. G. P. Taylor express I know the thoughts of the whole village :—

‘ Will you allow me to tender my sympathy to you in your sad bereavement by the loss of your noble and gallant son? The news cast quite a gloom over our home, as we have always been keenly interested in his career and felt proud to think that we could claim him to belong to our village. We live in deeds not years, it is not the length of existence that counts but what is achieved during that existence.’

From Dick Dugdale, in France, writing on the first anniversary of Ronald’s death :—

‘ It doesn’t seem like a year to me, because Ronald is just as close to me now as he was then—and will always be so I hope. I expect you are all feeling very sad now that the day has come round again, but anyhow we can all feel that there is one year less to wait before we see him again. His life or rather he himself is a tremendous inspiration to me always. Dear old Ronald, how one longs to write and tell him all one is doing and thinking : especially the funny things ! But I feel somehow all the time that he knows all about it all.’

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In making the index a few slight errors in the text have come to light. When there is any difference between the two the index should be accepted.

The military titles and units, when not in the text, are given in the index so far as they could be ascertained. They have also been brought up to date as completely as possible. The titles have now been largely given up on the return of their holders to civilian life, but the book does not deal with post-War conditions and I wished to show, so far as I could, the part played by Ronald's friends in the Great War.

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